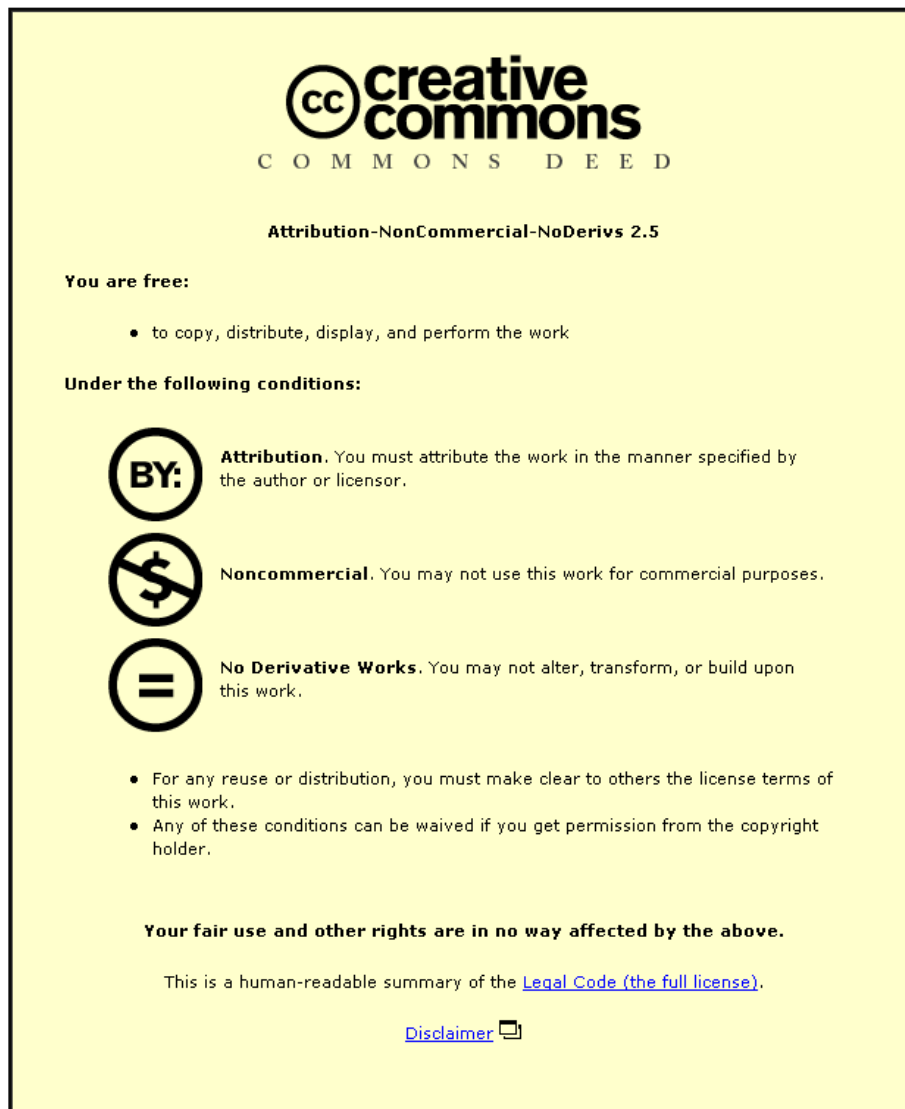


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# Chapter 1 – The Sermon on the Mount: A Manifesto for Christian Anarchism

Jesus' Sermon on the Mount is seen by many Christians – anarchist or not – as a moving summary of his message to the community of Christian disciples. Augustine describes it as “a perfect standard of Christian life,” Hans Küng as “the core of Christian ethics.”<sup>1</sup> Christian anarchists concur. Andrews, for instance, sees the Sermon as a “summary of Christ's rules” in which the “teaching of Christ [is] epitomized.”<sup>2</sup> For Tolstoy as well, the Sermon on the Mount stands out as the most pertinent summary of this teaching: “In no other place does Jesus speak with such solemnity; nowhere else does he enunciate so many moral, clear, and comprehensible rules, appealing so straight to the heart of every man; nowhere else does he speak to a greater or more various mass of simple folk.”<sup>3</sup>

At the same time, as Penner puts it, the Sermon on the Mount is also “one of the most acute exegetical battlegrounds of the New Testament,” in particular over the section in which Jesus speaks of love and non-resistance.<sup>4</sup> It is therefore not surprising to find many Christian anarchists commenting, sometimes at length, on the pronouncements of Jesus in the Sermon. The purpose of this Chapter is to combine these scattered comments into one aggregate commentary, one generic Christian anarchist exegesis of the Sermon on the Mount.

Scholars often emphasise the parallels between Jesus' long Sermon on the Mount in Matthew's Gospel and the much shorter Sermon in the Plain in Luke's.<sup>5</sup> A discussion of whether these two Sermons are narratives of the same event, however, falls outside the scope of this book. Their content is very similar. Matthew's longer version covers the content of Luke's, and since it is this content that matters for Christian anarchism, this Chapter follows Christian anarchist thinkers in focusing almost exclusively on the Sermon on the *Mount*.

It will become obvious to the reader coming from a traditional Christian background that the Christian anarchist interpretation can frequently be quite different to more conventional exegeses of these passages. As Chapter 3 makes clear, however, Christian anarchists attribute this discrepancy to, at best, innocent misreading, and at worst, deliberate deceit on the part of established commentators. Christian anarchists therefore consciously bypass these traditional

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<sup>1</sup> Aurelius Augustine, *The Sermon on the Mount Expounded, and the Harmony of the Evangelist*, ed. Marcus Dods, trans. William Findlay and S. D. F. Salmond (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1873), 1; Hans Küng, *Christianity: Its Essence and History*, trans. John Bowden (London: SCM, 1995), 52.

<sup>2</sup> Dave Andrews, *Not Religion, but Love: Practicing a Radical Spirituality of Compassion* (Cleveland: Pilgrim, 2001), 65; Dave Andrews, *A Spiritual Framework for Ethical Reflection*, available from <http://www.daveandrews.com.au/publications.html> (accessed 3 December 2006), 3.

<sup>3</sup> Tolstoy, *What I Believe*, 13.

<sup>4</sup> Penner, *The New Testament, the Christian, and the State*, 38.

<sup>5</sup> Matthew 5:1-7:29; Luke 6:20-49.

interpretations and try to base their exegeses solely on scripture. Tolstoy, for example, openly admits that he found himself “in the strange position of having to search for the meaning of [Jesus’] teaching as for something new.”<sup>6</sup> This Chapter follows Christian anarchists in ignoring the tradition in order to present the pure Christian anarchist reading of the text. Traditional commentaries, as well as the Christian anarchist reasons for bypassing them, are mentioned only in Chapter 3.

For Tolstoy – the most cited exemplar of a Christian anarchist thinker – the Sermon on the Mount held a very special place. Tolstoy had struggled with a deep existential crisis for years when, while pondering a specific verse of this Sermon, suddenly came “a clear comprehension of all the teaching of Jesus,” and “all that before had seemed obscure became intelligible.”<sup>7</sup> This understanding brought his existential torment to a close, it unlocked for him the essence of Jesus’ teaching, and it was based on this understanding of Christianity that he began la

verse which Tolstoy saw as the key to Christianity is the famous verse where Jesus invites his disciples not to resist evil, but to turn the other cheek instead.

Not all Christian anarchists follow Tolstoy in elevating that single verse as high as he does, but all see in it and in the Sermon on the Mount a moving articulation of Jesus’ central teaching of love and forgiveness. Most would agree that the Sermon on the Mount forms an ideal blueprint, a manifesto, as it were, for any truly authentic Christian community. And even if they do not all see the passage on not resisting evil as the absolute essence of Christianity, most Christian anarchists share the analysis of human society which Tolstoy develops from his exegesis of that passage. Moreover, just as with Tolstoy, the starting point for most Christian anarchists is not so much a critique of the state as an understanding of Jesus’ radical teaching on love and forgiveness which, when *then* contrasted to the state, leads them to their anarchist conclusion.<sup>9</sup>

The most important passage to examine from the Sermon on the Mount is therefore the one where Jesus calls for his disciples not to resist evil. The first and biggest section of this Chapter reviews, in detail, the various clusters of interpretation made by Christian anarchists (and selected pacifists) on this passage in order to draw out its anarchist implications. The second section considers the instruction not to judge; the third, that to love our enemies; and the fourth, that not to swear oaths. The fifth section briefly mentions the Golden Rule. The sixth relays the few and rather less relevant reflections of Christian anarchists on the remaining passages of the Sermon, except the passage where Jesus claims not to be destroying but fulfilling the Old Law, which is examined in more detail in the seventh section. The Chapter is then brought to a close by the eighth and final section, which returns to the idea that the Sermon on the Mount should guide the practice of the Christian community.

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<sup>6</sup> Tolstoy, *What I Believe*, 66 (see also: 50).

<sup>7</sup> Tolstoy, *What I Believe*, 18.

<sup>8</sup> For Tolstoy’s autobiographical account of his existential crisis, see Tolstoy, “A Confession.” For his consequent understanding of the teaching of Jesus, see, in particular, Tolstoy, *What I Believe*.

<sup>9</sup> Ostergaard, *Resisting the Nation State*, section 12.

## 1.1 – Resist not evil

The instruction not to resist evil, a defining passage in the Christian Bible, comes in verses thirty-eight to forty-two of the fifth chapter of Matthew's Gospel, where Jesus tells his disciples:

38. Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth:
39. But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil<sup>10</sup>: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.
40. And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also.
41. And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain.
42. Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away.<sup>11</sup>

The subsections which follow elaborate the main sets of comments Christian anarchists make about these verses, beginning with a closer look at Jesus' three illustrations of non-resistance to show why these are politically significant. The second subsection introduces the view that what Jesus demands is not unresponsive passivity but a very purposeful reaction. The third shows that Jesus is calling for his disciples to rise above the law of retaliation, and thus prepares the ground for the fourth subsection, which discusses Christian anarchist reflections on the cycle of violence, and the fifth, which explains why Christian anarchists believe Jesus to be proposing a method to overcome it. The sixth and final subsection then clarifies why the preceding exegesis drives Christian anarchists to their anarchism, to their criticism of the state.

### 1.1.1 – Jesus' three illustrations

Elliott and Wink interpret Jesus' three brief illustrations one by one in order to show that in Jesus' historical context, these had immediate political connotations which can often be missed by exegetes who are foreign to that context.

On the first illustration, Wink begins by asking: "Why the right cheek?" He then explains that, in those times, "the left hand was used only for unclean hands," which means the attacker must have used the right hand – but, in that case, "the only way one could strike the right cheek with the right hand would be with the back of the hand."<sup>12</sup> In that context, he suggests this would be "unmistakably an insult," a humiliation.<sup>13</sup> Elliott reaches the same conclusion

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<sup>10</sup> The Greek word in the original text is *πονηρόν*, which can be *grammatically* translated both as "evil" and as "him that is evil" or "the evildoer." The *meaning* of the expression, however, points to "evil" in general rather than to some specific entity "that is evil." The majority of the versions of the Bible, therefore, have opted for a translation into "evil" in the broad sense. In their own translation, Christian anarchists (and Christian pacifists) sometimes fluctuate between one variant and the other. Either way, these alterations have little consequence on the formulation of Christian anarchist thought since Christian anarchists nevertheless always *interpret* it as meaning "evil" in the broad sense.

<sup>11</sup> Matthew 5:38-42 (King James Version's italics removed).

<sup>12</sup> Wink, *Jesus' Third Way*, 15.

<sup>13</sup> Wink, *Jesus' Third Way*, 15.



albeit from a slightly different angle: he notes that “Hitting someone in the face, particularly in front of witnesses, was in those times, just as it is today, a humiliation and a loss of dignity for the victim in Middle-East society.”<sup>14</sup> Jesus, both Wink and Elliott suggest, is depicting a situation which his followers would immediately recognise as humiliating, and which, in that society, would consequently call for an appropriate, equally forceful and humiliating response to uphold one’s dignity and honour.<sup>15</sup>

The response Jesus recommends, however, goes against these local expectations. For Elliott, what Jesus is saying is: “Don’t retaliate. Don’t behave in the way your enemy expects you to behave. Do what your attacker least expects: behave in the opposite way.”<sup>16</sup> In effect, by turning the other cheek, “the cycle of violence is unexpectedly interrupted.”<sup>17</sup> This, Elliott contends, confuses the attacker, who now “is no longer in control of the process he initiated. He is, in a very real sense, disarmed!”<sup>18</sup> Similarly, Wink claims that turning the other cheek “robs the oppressor of the power to humiliate,” which forces the attacker to regard the victim “as an equal human being.”<sup>19</sup> Both Elliott and Wink therefore agree that Jesus’ surprising response in this first illustration disempowers the attacker and forces him to regard the victim in a different light.

Elliott and Wink bring a similar perspective to the other two responses illustrated by Jesus. In the second one, they note that by pointedly handing over his cloak in response to being sued for his coat, the victim would end up naked. Yet Elliott argues that nakedness in that context would be offensive, and that the community would blame the person who brought this about more than the actual victim.<sup>20</sup> Along the same lines, Wink contends that this nakedness would register “a stunning protest” against the social and legal system that brought this about; that the “entire system” would thus be “publicly unmasked;” but that this unmasking “offers the creditor a chance to see, perhaps for the first time in his life, what his practice causes, and to repent.”<sup>21</sup> So, again, Jesus’ recommendation in this illustration would be “a practical, strategic measure for empowering the oppressed” against, in this case, such unfair use of the legal system.<sup>22</sup>

Regarding the third illustration, both Elliott and Wink agree that Jesus is here making a reference to a then established military practice, whereby a soldier could force a civilian to carry his pack, but for one mile only.<sup>23</sup> Once again, here, Jesus’ proposed response throws the soldier “off-balance,” by

<sup>14</sup> Elliott, *Freedom, Justice and Christian Counter-Culture*, 176.

<sup>15</sup> Archie Penner makes a similar point: Penner, *The New Testament, the Christian, and the State*, 44.

<sup>16</sup> Elliott, *Freedom, Justice and Christian Counter-Culture*, 176.

<sup>17</sup> Elliott, *Freedom, Justice and Christian Counter-Culture*, 176.

<sup>18</sup> Elliott, *Freedom, Justice and Christian Counter-Culture*, 176.

<sup>19</sup> Wink, *Jesus’ Third Way*, 16.

<sup>20</sup> Elliott, *Freedom, Justice and Christian Counter-Culture*, 176-177.

<sup>21</sup> Wink, *Jesus’ Third Way*, 18-19. Here again, Penner agrees that the example concerns the area of litigation: Penner, *The New Testament, the Christian, and the State*, 44.

<sup>22</sup> Wink, *Jesus’ Third Way*, 19.

<sup>23</sup> Here, Penner breaks this illustration in two, and suggests that while verse 41 “is from the area of forced service to government,” verse 42 “is from the area of personal property;” but all he concludes is that as with the previous two examples, the point Jesus is making is that resistance “should not be practiced.” Penner, *The New Testament, the Christian, and the State*, 44-45.

depriving him “of the predictability of your response.”<sup>24</sup> Doing twice as much as what is usually allowed, Elliott argues, is “a way of subverting authority” in that “the victim is claiming the power to determine for himself the lengths to which he is prepared to go.”<sup>25</sup> So yet again, Jesus’ illustration of non-resistance implies a critique of the expectations of his contemporary society and seeks to empower the victim through a counter-intuitive response.

Elliott further argues that the three illustrations cover the three “strategies which the enemy is most likely to employ” against followers of Jesus: “physical intimidation, manipulation of the legal system, and military co-option,” each of which “involves a form of violence.”<sup>26</sup> According to Elliott, therefore, Jesus’ examples have immediate political significance: they illustrate three typical kinds of violence within that political context and three unexpected, subversive yet non-violent responses to it.

### 1.1.2 – A purposeful reaction

Moreover, a point which Christian anarchists (and pacifists) are keen to emphasise is that Jesus’ non-resistance is not just some completely inactive, uncaring acceptance of evil, but a very specific, strategic response – a response which Jesus illustrates clearly with his three examples. Here, however, views diverge among Christian anarchists as to exactly what kind of action is allowed and what kind of resistance is forbidden: resistance to certain *types* of evil, resistance *by evil*, or *any* resistance at all. These very important disagreements are discussed in detail in Chapter 4. Here, what should be noted is that non-resistance as it is illustrated by Jesus is a purposeful and determined type of response.

Wink, for instance, who (as explained in the Introduction) is not a Christian anarchist but more of a militant pacifist, maintains that an accurate translation of the Greek does not suggest “the passive, doormat quality” which many Christians “cowardly” adopt, but that Jesus’ statement “is arguably one of the most revolutionary political statements ever uttered.”<sup>27</sup> He thinks that “court translators” turned “nonviolent resistance into docility,” and that a “proper translation” of the Greek word for “resist” would be: “violent rebellion, armed revolt, sharp dissention.” Thus according to Wink, Jesus was saying: “Do not strike back at evil (or, one who has done you evil) in kind. Do not give blow for blow. Do not retaliate against violence with violence.” Jesus, Wink continues, “was no less committed to opposing evil than the anti-Roman resistance fighters. The only difference was over the means to be used: *how* one should fight evil.” There are three possible responses to evil: passive “flight,” violent “fight,” or “militant nonviolence.”<sup>28</sup> For Wink, a correct translation of the Greek verb shows

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<sup>24</sup> Wink, *Jesus' Third Way*, 21.

<sup>25</sup> Elliott, *Freedom, Justice and Christian Counter-Culture*, 177.

<sup>26</sup> Elliott, *Freedom, Justice and Christian Counter-Culture*, 177.

<sup>27</sup> Wink, *Jesus' Third Way*, 12.

<sup>28</sup> All t

' *Third Way*, 13.

that Jesus was rejecting the first two options and recommending the third. He was not preaching inaction, but a very radical type of reaction.<sup>29</sup>

Ballou, whose position is perhaps best described as on the cusp between Christian anarchism and pacifism, is of a similar opinion to Wink's. Based on Jesus' examples, he argues that the precise type of resistance Jesus forbids is: "resistance of personal injury by means of injury inflicted."<sup>30</sup> He therefore believes the word resistance should not "be taken in its widest meaning" but "in the strict sense of the Saviour's injunction," which would consequently mean that "Evil is to be resisted by all just means, but never with evil."<sup>31</sup> Both Wink and Ballou therefore seem to interpret Jesus' instruction as forbidding violent or evil responses to evil, but not necessarily political resistance as such.

However, Tolstoy, who after all is the conventional exemplar of classic Christian anarchism, sometimes appears to disagree. In his version of the Gospel, Jesus says: "Do not fight evil by evil, and not only do not exact at law an ox for an ox, a slave for a slave, a life for a life, but do not resist evil *at all*."<sup>32</sup> He seems to be interpreting the word resistance in the widest possible sense. When read this way, Jesus' recommended reply does not admit any form of resistance at all. And yet somewhere else, Tolstoy writes that "Jesus says, 'You wish to destroy evil *by evil*, but that is unreasonable. That there may be no evil, do none yourselves.'"<sup>33</sup> This time, Tolstoy seems to imply that there is a form of response, perhaps even of resistance, which might not be tainted by evil. Tolstoy thus does not appear fully consistent in his interpretation of Jesus' teaching. Sometimes he interprets Jesus' command to forbid all forms of resistance; sometimes he interprets it to forbid only violent resistance. These important issues are returned to in Chapter 4.

The point to note here is that although there may be disagreement among Christian anarchists and pacifists about exactly what form of reaction is allowed by these verses, they all (Tolstoy included) insist that the Christian response is a very real and very radical *reaction*. In Bartley's words, "nonviolence does not mean inaction, but rather means not being violent in the actions we *do* take."<sup>34</sup> Thus, as Elliott appreciates, what Jesus offers is a genuine strategy, which consist in both not resisting and doing more than is demanded.<sup>35</sup> This is a form of action, a genuine, purposeful, tactical reaction.

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<sup>29</sup> On this, see also Glen H. Stassen, *The Fourteen Triads of the Sermon on the Mount* (Fuller), available from [http://documents.fuller.edu/sot/faculty/stassen/cp\\_content/homepage/homepage.htm](http://documents.fuller.edu/sot/faculty/stassen/cp_content/homepage/homepage.htm) (accessed 31 December 2008); Glen H. Stassen, *Living the Sermon on the Mount: A Practical Hope for Grace and Deliverance* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2006), especially chap. 4; Glen H. Stassen and David P. Gushee, *Kingdom Ethics: Following Jesus in the Contemporary Context* (Madison: InterVarsity, 2003), especially chap. 6.

<sup>30</sup> Ballou, *Christian Non-Resistance*, chap. 1, para. 48.

<sup>31</sup> Adin Ballou, "A Catechism of Non-R

<sup>32</sup> Tolstoy, "The Gospel in Brief," 165 (emphasis added).

<sup>33</sup> Tolstoy, *What I Believe*, 87 (emphasis added).

<sup>34</sup> Bartley, *Faith and Politics after Christendom*, 174-175 (Bartley's emphasis).

<sup>35</sup> Elliott, *Freedom, Justice and Christian Counter-Culture*, 175, 178.

### 1.1.3 – *Beyond lex talionis*

In these verses, therefore, Jesus is prescribing and describing a radical type of reaction. This radical response, coupled with Jesus' introductory words ("Ye have heard that hath been said [...] But I say unto you"), implies a disapproval of something about his political context. That something, for Christian anarchists, relates to the cycle of violence inherent in a non-Christian society's administration of justice, and more specifically in *lex* (or *jus*) *talionis*, the law of retaliation which is respected in the Old Testament.

First, however, it is necessary to note that *lex talionis* is not a licence for unlimited violence. Penner explains that in the Old Testament settings which Jesus is referring to, "the expression [...] amounts to a statement of principle based on literal exactions in some areas of civil and criminal justice," and it was therefore aiming at "the administration of justice" on the basis of reciprocity.<sup>36</sup> Penner makes clear that "redress for wrong was meant as much as the idea of retaliation," that the purpose of it "was to curb crime and sin and to maintain civil order among the Hebrews," and that therefore "the injunction was not a permission to exercise private and hateful revenge in the sense in which the word is often used currently."<sup>37</sup> The idea behind *lex talionis* is that of justified retaliation, "to mete out punishment on the basis and with the intent of justice."<sup>38</sup> Equally important, however, is how this "fair" and "just" level of retaliation can be used by the two parties as a basis for reaching an alternative solution: a "fair" and "just" level of compensation. *Lex talionis* therefore provides the basis for either retributive (punishment of the offender) or restorative (compensation by the offender) justice.<sup>39</sup> These principles, Penner remarks, were not used only in the times of Jesus, but are also "basic in civil and criminal law today."<sup>40</sup>

In the above verses, however, Jesus calls for his disciples, when wronged, not to "seek revenge or redress through legal or coercive means."<sup>41</sup> In order to "limit the level of retaliation taken in a world caught up in relentless cycles of revenge," argues Andrews, God once ordered human beings not to be excessive, to take only one eye for one eye, not more; but here Jesus is pushing the same intention further: "We were called to move from unlimited violence to limited violence by the command to only take an 'eye for an eye.' And we were called to move on from violence to nonviolence by the command to 'turn the other cheek.'"<sup>42</sup>

Hennacy, Bartley and Yoder all agree. For Hennacy, "in the earlier Bible times, if a man knocked out an eye of another man, according to tradition, he'd be lucky to get off with being lynched at once. The Jews were trying to

<sup>36</sup> Penner, *The New Testament, the Christian, and the State*, 40.

<sup>37</sup> Penner, *The New Testament, t*

<sup>39</sup> Indeed, according to Stephen W. Carson, restoration – not retribution – was the goal of Mosaic Law. Stephen W. Carson, *Biblical Anarchism*, available from <http://www.com/orig/carson2.html> (accessed 8 November 2007), especially para. 5.

<sup>40</sup> Penner, *The New Testament, the Christian, and the State*, 38.

<sup>41</sup> Penner, *The New Testament, the Christian, and the State*, 42.

<sup>42</sup> Both quotations from Andrews in this paragraph are from Dave Andrews, *Subversive Spirituality, Ecclesial and Civil Disobedience: A Survey of Biblical Politics as Incarnated in Jesus and Interpreted by Paul*, available from <http://anz.jesusradicals.com/subspirit.pdf> (accessed 17 July 2006), 1.

lessen the severity of this,” and what Jesus is here proposing is “to go a bit farther.”<sup>43</sup> For Bartley, Jesus “made it clear that [*lex talionis*] was not enough” and instead urged “forgiveness and what many would see as the creation of an upward spiral of peace.”<sup>44</sup> Hence, for Yoder, “What in the old covenant was a limit on vengeance [...] has now become a special measure of love demanded by concern for the redemption of the offender.”<sup>45</sup>

Both commands are informed by the same intention, but non-resistance to evil goes further than the more rigid law of reciprocity. Indeed, this is one of the senses in which Jesus “fulfils” rather than “destroys” the law, by rearticulating it based on its original purpose (this theme is addressed in more detail later in this Chapter, as well as in the Conclusion). Jesus is instructing his disciples to move beyond the *lex talionis* of the Old Testament, to push its original intentions even further. For Christian anarchists, the reason for which Jesus does this has to do with the way the *lex talionis* can – a – ly tends to – spiral out of control and degenerate into an unrelenting cycle of violence and revenge.

### 1.1.4 – The cycle of violence

Christian anarchists interpret Jesus’ instruction as a comment not just on the Old Law, but also on human practice past and present. This subsection and the next therefore convey, in considerable detail, Christian anarchist reflections on the potential cycle of violence inherent in *lex talionis*, and their understanding of Jesus’ non-resistance in light of that.

It will become obvious that Christian anarchists are quick to generalise Jesus’ comments on *lex talionis* to the broader political question of how to deal with evil and achieve justice in society as a whole. They reflect on the use of violence as a method to achieve any kind of justice – from personal or collective retribution all the way to the much broader visions of social justice articulated by competing schools of political thought. They also thus broaden the notion of evil in a similar way to include not just personal evil but also social, political and economic evil and injustice. This broadening of the apparently more immediate meaning of these verses may not appear fully justified at first, but as Chapter 2 shows, it accords with Jesus’ broader teaching and example. Besides, it resonates with the long established debate in more conventional Christian theology on the theological and ontological relation between love and justice – a theme examined in the Conclusion. Jesus’ three examples admittedly illustrate a narrower set of instances of evil, but they are merely illustrations of his reinterpretation of the much broader principle of *lex talionis*, itself a principle aiming at the achievement of justice in society.

Christian anarchists begin by noting that forceful resistance is almost universally accepted as the justified method for humanity to confront injustice. Ballou observes that “The almost universal opinion and practice of mankind is on

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<sup>43</sup> Hennacy, *The Book of Ammon*, 491.

<sup>44</sup> Bartley, *Faith and Politics after Christendom*, 191.

<sup>45</sup> Yoder, “The Political A

the side of resistance of injury with injury.”<sup>46</sup> Hennacy remarks the same, adding that “It [is] plain that this system [does] not work.”<sup>47</sup> “The earth,” Ballou regrets, “has been rendered a vast slaughter-field – a theatre of reciprocal cruelty and vengeance.”<sup>48</sup> Why? Because “The wisdom of this world has relied on the efficacy of injury, terror, EVIL, to resist evil,” says Ballou.<sup>49</sup> Tolstoy is of the same opinion: the whole history of humankind for him betrays incessant and yet ultimately failed attempts to resist evil with evil, to deal violently with problems of violence, to wage wars in order to preclude other wars.<sup>50</sup>

This method, however, only multiplies evil. Because human beings often fail to see that another’s violence was to him only fair retaliation for an original offence, they get caught in an unending cycle of vendettas. If the justice of the retaliation is not recognised by its victim, what to one party is only fair retaliation becomes unjustified aggression to the other. Reciprocating evil with evil may *sometimes* appear just, but more often than not, it is thereby multiplying evil. Intrinsic to *lex talionis*, therefore, is the risk of it sparking a cycle of violence. Tolstoy quotes Ballou’s explanation:

He who attacks another and insults him, engenders in him the sentiment of hatred, the root of all evil. To offend another because he has offended us, on the specious pretext of removing an evil, is really to repeat an evil deed, both against him and against ourselves – to beget, or at least to free and to encourage, the very demon we wish to expel. Satan cannot be driven out by Satan, untruth cannot be cleansed by untruth, and evil cannot be vanquished by evil.<sup>51</sup>

Or as Tolstoy puts it, “One wrong added to another wrong does not make a right; it merely extends the area of wrong.”<sup>52</sup> An eye for eye eventually makes the whole world go blind.<sup>53</sup> It is hard to overestimate how important this realisation is for all Christian anarchists, especially Tolstoy, Hennacy and Ballou. They believe Jesus exposed this cycle of violence and showed humankind a way out of it. It is therefore worth looking in more detail at some of the reflections made by Christian anarchists on this vicious circle of violence.

Ellul, in his book devoted to the subject, asserts that there are five laws of violence.<sup>54</sup> One of these is that “Violence begets violence – *nothing*

<sup>46</sup> Ballou, *Christian Non-Resistance*, chap. 1, para. 17.

<sup>47</sup> Hennacy, *The Book of Ammon*, 30.

<sup>48</sup> Ballou, *Christian Non-Resistance*, chap. 1, para. 17.

<sup>49</sup> Ballou, *Christian Non-Resistance*, chap. 1, para. 68.

<sup>50</sup> George Kennan, “A Visit to Count Tolstoi,” *The Century Magazine* 34/2 (1887).

<sup>51</sup> Ballou, “A Catechism of Non-Resistance,” 17.

<sup>52</sup> Leo Tolstoy, quoted in Kennan, “A Visit to Count Tolstoi,” 257.

<sup>53</sup> These words are usually attributed to Mohandas K. Gandhi, but the exact reference for them is nonetheless never specified. Whether or not he did say these words, they do eloquently sum up his critique of violence as a means to any end. In a

-violence was in fact strongly influenced by his reading of Tolstoy. Moreover, Andrews, a Christian anarchist who admittedly spent many years in India and was influenced by Gandhi, repeats this famous quote in his discussion Jesus’ teaching in Dave Andrews, *Plan Be: Be the Change You Want to See in the World* (Milton Keynes: Authentic, 2008), 3.

<sup>54</sup> Ellul, *Violence*, 93-108. For an interesting explorative comparison of the thought of Ellul with that of René Girard on violence, see Matthew Patillo, *Violence, Anarchy and Scripture: Jacques Ellul and René Girard*, available from [http://www.preachingpeace.org/documents/Patillo\\_Ellul\\_Girard.pdf](http://www.preachingpeace.org/documents/Patillo_Ellul_Girard.pdf) (accessed 17 March 2009).

else.”<sup>55</sup> We think that laudable ends sometimes justify slightly unfortunate means. Most Christian anarchists passionately disagree. Violent means only produce further violence, and they fatally corrupt and destroy even the worthiest of aims.<sup>56</sup> To revise the popular dictum, the end simply does not, ever, justify the means. “When evil means are employed,” Berdyaev insists, “these ends are never attained: the means take central place, and the ends are either forgotten, or become purely rhetorical.”<sup>57</sup> Countless human goals have been fatally compromised by the violent means which were adopted in an attempt to reach them but which ended up taking centre stage while the original goal became more and more distant and elusive.

Nonetheless, moral aims are necessary preconditions for violent means to be adopted in the first place. As another of Ellul’s laws of violence highlights, proponents of violence always try to justify it both to others and to themselves by evoking venerable goals: “Violence is so unappealing that every user of it has produced lengthy apologies to demonstrate to the people that it is just and morally warranted.”<sup>58</sup> This is understandable, and proponents of violence can rarely be accused of evil intentions: they usually genuinely and wholeheartedly believe that the superior ends they long for can be achieved by the violent means they succumb to. Berdyaev remarks that “no one ever proposes evil ends: evil is always disguised as good, and detracts from the good.”<sup>59</sup> Yet the resort to violence is precisely where evil seeps in.

Besides, using violence or coercion to impose a social vision upon rebellious minorities is bound to fail. Tolstoy argues that since “there is in human society an endless variety of opinions as to what constitutes wrong and oppression,” authorising violence for any one cause inevitably guarantees a vicious cycle of evil tit-for-tat, “a universal reign of violence.”<sup>60</sup> Those who are coerced will only obey while they are weaker than the tyrants, under fear of threats. However “As soon as they grow stronger they naturally not only cease to do what they do not want to do, but, embittered by the struggle against their oppressors and everything they have had to suffer from them, they [...], in their turn, force their opponents to do what *they* regard as good and necessary.”<sup>61</sup> Revolutionary violence promises counter-revolutionary violence.

One of the fundamental problems with violent methods, Christian anarchists argue, is that “once we consent to use violence ourselves, we have to consent to our adversary’s using it, too.”<sup>62</sup> This is because, Ellul continues, “We cannot demand to receive treatment different from that we mete out. We must understand that our own violence necessarily justifies the enemy’s, and we cannot object to his violence.”<sup>63</sup> Adopting violence as a method to attain one’s goals implies the recognition of violence as an acceptable method in the first place.

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<sup>55</sup> Ellul, *Violence*, 100 (Ellul’s emphasis).

<sup>56</sup> See, for instance: Ellul, *Violence*, 102; Hennacy, *The Book of Ammon*, 59.

<sup>57</sup> Berdyaev, *The Realm of the Spirit and the Realm of Caesar*, 88.

<sup>58</sup> Ellul, *Violence*, 103.

<sup>59</sup> Berdyaev, *The Realm of the Spirit and the Realm of Caesar*, 87.

<sup>60</sup> Leo Tolstoy, quoted in Kennan, “A Visit to Count Tolstoi,” 259.

<sup>61</sup> Tolstoy, “The Law of Love and the Law of Violence,” 163 (Tolstoy’s emphasis).

<sup>62</sup> Ellul, *Violence*, 99.

<sup>63</sup> Ellul, *Violence*, 99.

Thus in responding to violence with violence, says Yoder, “We agree with the other party that his weapons are right and thereby really loose our right to tell him that what he is doing is wrong.”<sup>64</sup> According to Tolstoy, that is precisely “where the danger of employing violence lies: all the arguments put forward by those who employ it can with equal or even greater justification be used against them.”<sup>65</sup> By smiting back when smitten on the right cheek, one is conceding that smiting is an acceptable type of action. One side’s violence will always be seen by the other side as legitimising its own choice of violent methods.

Worse, the use of violence creates justifications for further violence. On top of implicitly conceding that violence is an acceptable method, the use of violence actually becomes a justification, almost an invitation, as it were, for a violent reply. This is another of Ellul’s laws of violence, that “violence creates violence.”<sup>66</sup> That is, “every act of violence can explain and seek to justify itself as a response to an earlier act of violence” – hence the danger inherent in *lex talionis*.<sup>67</sup> Violent acts aggrieve those who are targeted, as well as their families and friends.<sup>68</sup> These people will typically seek justice in violent retaliation. Hence using violence gives the opponent good reasons for more violence in return. Conversely, this violent retaliation “makes the attacker feel he is right, that all humans are just the same, they must always use weapons to defend themselves,” says pacifist Richard Gregg.<sup>69</sup> In short, violence obscures its initial aim, validates itself as a method, and justifies more violence in return.

Moreover, Ellul’s first law declares that “Violence becomes a habit of simplification of situations, political, social, or human. And a habit cannot quickly be broken.”<sup>70</sup> Evil overcomes us, and we are “led to play evil’s game – to respond by using evil’s means, to do evil.”<sup>71</sup> The world is accustomed to this game, caught in the delusional habit of the efficacy of violence (this is further discussed in the Conclusion). Yoder puts it succinctly: “Violence is always, apparently, the shortest and surest way;” but he immediately adds: “And in the long run that appearance always deceives.”<sup>72</sup> We have a habit of thinking that violence can help us achieve our aims, but in the long run, all it does is add momentum to the destructive cycle of violence.

“As fire will not put out fire,” Tolstoy therefore believes, “so evil will not destroy evil.”<sup>73</sup> Even if we think we are right, we must resist the temptation to force others to obey our will.<sup>74</sup> As Garrison explains, “physical coercion is not

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<sup>64</sup> John Howard Yoder, “Peacemaking Amid Political Revolution,” (Elkhart: Associate Mennonite Biblical Seminary, [1970?]), available from <http://www.jesusradicals.com/library/yoder/peacemakingamidrevolution.pdf> (accessed 16 May 2006), 60.

<sup>65</sup> Tolstoy, “The Kingdom of God Is within You,” 269.

<sup>66</sup> Ellul, *Violence*, 95.

<sup>67</sup> Goddard, *Living the Word, Resisting the World*, 168.

<sup>68</sup> Kennan, “A Visit to Count Tolstoi,” 257.

<sup>69</sup> Richard B. Gregg, *The Power of Nonviolence*, Abridged ed. (Lusaka: M. M. Temple, 1960), 46.

<sup>70</sup> Ellul, *Violence*, 94.

<sup>71</sup> Ellul, *Violence*, 173.

<sup>72</sup> Yoder, “The Theological Basis of the Christian Witness to the State,” 24.

<sup>73</sup> Tolstoy, *What I Believe*, 49.

<sup>74</sup> Ronald Sampson, “Tolstoy on Power,” *Journal of the Conflict Research Society* 1/2 (1977), 68.



adapted to moral regeneration;" evil means do not teach moral virtues.<sup>75</sup> Besides, according to Tolstoy's Jesus, "every man is full of faults and incapable of guiding others. By taking revenge, we only teach others to do the same."<sup>76</sup> The very fact that violence sometimes appears to work in the short run only teaches exactly that – that violence appears to work, not that the user of violence was correct.<sup>77</sup>

Christian anarchists urge every human being to decide where they stand on this. The question of how to respond to evil cannot be avoided.<sup>78</sup> *Lex talionis* appears to offer a solution, but inherent in it is a tendency for reciprocal violence to spiral out of control. Jesus indirectly exposed this logic by advising to go beyond it. On the face of it, however, humanity has so far declined to heed this advice. Yet by opting for violent means either to respond to violence or to try to reach at times admittedly very worthy goals, the world has ensnared itself in a self-reinforcing cycle of violence and resistance. For Christian anarchists, Jesus makes clear that it is in the choice of means that the fatal mistake is committed. For the vicious cycle of violence to be broken, humanity needs an alternative method for responding to injustice and reaching moral aims.

### 1.1.5 – Overcoming of the cycle of violence

Christian anarchists firmly believe Jesus both taught and lived out such an alternative, and that he best expressed it in those verses counselling non-resistance: "the sub-principle of Christian Non-Resistance," Ballou maintains, is that "Evil can be overcome only with good."<sup>79</sup> It is not an easy method, and at first, it can appear counterintuitive: Ellul indeed stresses that non-resistance implies "seeking another kind of victory, renouncing the marks of victory" (more on this in Chapter 4 and in the Conclusion).<sup>80</sup> Christian anarchists however believe it is the only real alternative for humankind, "the only possible way of breaking the chain of violence, of rupturing the circle of fear and hate."<sup>81</sup>

At the same time, no Christian anarchist pretends it is painless. Overcoming evil with love requires a willingness to endure violence or evil without doing violence or evil in return, even – in fact, especially – when treated unjustly.<sup>82</sup> Hence it requires forgiveness since "by definition," explains Andrews, it "means making the sacrifice that is necessary to accept an injustice without demanding satisfaction in return."<sup>83</sup> That sacrifice is precisely the "relinquishing

<sup>75</sup> Garrison, "Declaration of Sentiments Adopted by the Peace Convention," 7.

<sup>76</sup> Tolstoy, "The Gospel in Brief," 269.

<sup>77</sup> John Milbank makes a similar point in his criticism of Augustine's pedagogy of punishment. John Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory: Beyond Secular Reason* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), 419-422.

<sup>78</sup> Tolstoy, "The Kingdom of God Is within You," 205.

<sup>79</sup> Ballou, *Christian Non-Resistance*, chap. 1, para. 73.

<sup>80</sup> Ellul, *Violence*, 173.

<sup>81</sup> Ellul, *Violence*, 173. See, also: Andrews, *Christi-Anarchy*, 100; Andrews, *Not Religion, but Love*, 23.

<sup>82</sup> See, for instance: [A

-Resistance; Tolstoy, *What I Believe*.

<sup>83</sup> Dave Andrews, *The Crux of the Struggle*, available from

<http://www.daveandrews.com.au/publications.html> (accessed 3 December 2006), 29.

[of a person's] right to restitution or retaliation in order to restore a relationship."<sup>84</sup>

Returning good for evil, Andrews says, "may not transform every bad relationship into a good friendship; but [...] is the *only* thing that ever has or ever will."<sup>85</sup> Only such an attitude of love, non-violence and forgiveness makes healing possible. It forces "the oppressor to see you in a new light" and to reconsider the situation.<sup>86</sup> This opens "the possibility of the enemy's becoming just as well," which is important because as Wink continues, "Both sides must win."<sup>87</sup> Non-resistance, and its concomitant willingness to suffer unjustly, clears the ground for reconciliation because it exposes the destructive violence of the situation and makes a moving plea to overcome it. It lays bare the cycle of violence and it refuses to prolong it.

Some might object that non-resistance is contrary to human nature in that it goes against the natural instinct of self-preservation. Ballou replies that actually, non-resistance is "the true method of self-preservation."<sup>88</sup> He recalls that resistance always tend to be justified by self-defence:

It professes to eschew all aggression, but invariably runs into it. It promises personal security, but exposes its subjects not only to aggravated assaults, but to every species of danger, sacrifice and calamity. It shakes the fist, brandishes the sword, and holds up the rod in terrorem to keep the peace, but constantly excites, provokes, and perpetuates war. It has been a liar from the beginning. It has been a Satan professing to cast out Satan, yet confirming the power and multiplying the number of demons which possess our unfortunate race. It does not conduce to self-preservation, but to self-destruction, and ought therefore to be discarded.<sup>89</sup>

The usual method of self-preservation "constantly [runs] into the very wrongs it aimed to prevent."<sup>90</sup> Like begets like, therefore "the disposition to injure begets a disposition to injure."<sup>91</sup> In other words, resistance divides and actually destroys humanity – whereas non-resistance actually preserves it. Accordingly, Ballou concludes that non-resistance is not contrary but "in perfect accordance with" the "laws of nature."<sup>92</sup> It is the only method which can preserve humanity in the long run.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Andrews, *The Crux of the Struggle*, 29.

<sup>85</sup> Andrews, *Not Religion, but Love*, 106 (Andrews' emphasis).

<sup>86</sup> Wink, *Jesus' Third Way*, 23.

<sup>87</sup> Wink, *Jesus' Third Way*, 32.

<sup>88</sup> Ballou, *Christian Non-Resistance*, chap. 4, para. 10.

<sup>89</sup> Ballou, *Christian Non-Resistance*, chap. 4, para. 12.

<sup>90</sup> Ballou, *Christian Non-Resistance*, chap. 4, para. 17.

<sup>91</sup> Ballou, *Christian Non-Resistance*, chap. 4, para. 37.

<sup>92</sup> Ballou, *Christian Non-Resistance*, chap. 4, para. 33.

<sup>93</sup> There is an inconsistency in Ballou's argument: *humanity* might preserve itself by not resisting, but an *individual* might perish. Non-resistance preserves humanity as a whole, but not necessarily individuals facing injury. Ballou, however, still believes that an individual has better chances of survival by not resisting, as he suggests in Ballou, *Non-Resistance in Relation to Human Governments*, 15-16. In any case, this also touches on the important theme of personal sacrifice, which is discussed again in Chapters 2 and 5. The point here is that while there may be a case for humanity's *collective* natural instinct to be one of non-resistance, that case would have to be formulated slightly differently to apply to human beings' *individual* natural instinct – and Ballou does that, but elsewhere.

Christian anarchists thus firmly believe in a strict continuity between ends and means. They believe these cannot be separated because the means eventually become the ends. Violence leads to violence, resistance to resistance. By the same token, peace, love and forgiveness can only begin with peaceful, loving and forgiving pioneers. The cycle of violence cannot be broken by cathartic or exemplary acts of violence; it can only be overcome by love and non-resistance. "[That] there may not be violence," Tolstoy insists, "it is necessary that *no-one under any pretext whatever should use violence, especially under the most usual pretext of retribution.*"<sup>94</sup> The only means to reduce violence in the world, Tolstoy deduces, "is the submissive peaceful endurance of all violence whatever."<sup>95</sup>

Of course, such non-resistance is not easy. In the words of an Indian poet, "True love is not for the faint-hearted."<sup>96</sup> Non-resistance requires an absolute commitment, and this means a willingness to suffer, even to die, rather than to resist. Thus non-resistance is not cowardly; it requires courage.<sup>97</sup> Gandhi observed that "bravery consists in dying, not in killing."<sup>98</sup> (This readiness to pay the ultimate price is discussed in more detail later, notably in Chapters 2 and 5.) Non-resistance involves courage because it demands a willingness to suffer, perhaps even to die (but not kill).<sup>99</sup>

Besides, non-resistance is what Jesus commands, and Tolstoy is adamant that "Jesus really means what he says."<sup>100</sup> Indeed, Tolstoy only made sense of these verses when "he admitted to himself that perhaps Jesus meant that saying literally."<sup>101</sup> He explains that he had been distracted by trying to explain the passage allegorically, even though, deep down, he knew that it expressed "the vital principle of Christianity."<sup>102</sup> The teaching, however, could not be clearer:

It may be affirmed that the constant fulfilment of this rule is difficult, and that not every man will find his happiness in obeying it. It may be said that it is foolish; that, as unbelievers pretend, Jesus was a visionary, an idealist, whose impracticable rules were only followed because of the stupidity of his disciples. But it is impossible not to admit that Jesus did say very clearly and definitely that which he intended to say: namely, that men should not resist evil; and that therefore he who accepts his teaching cannot resist.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> Leo Tolstoy, "The End of the Age: An Essay on the Approaching Revolution," in *Government Is Violence: Essays on Anarchism and Pacifism*, ed. David Stephens, trans. Vladimir Tchertkoff (London: Phoenix, 1990), 25 (Tolstoy's emphasis).

<sup>95</sup> Tolstoy, "The End of the Age," 26.

<sup>96</sup> Kabir, quoted in Anna Davie, "Setting Prisoners Free: A Workshop on an Anarchist Christian Response to Imprisonment," paper presented at *God Save the Queen: Anarchism and Christianity Today*, All Hallows Church, Leeds, 2-4 June 2006, available from [http://uk.jesusradicals.com/Setting\\_t\\_Prisoners\\_Fre.pdf](http://uk.jesusradicals.com/Setting_t_Prisoners_Fre.pdf) (accessed 4 June 2006), 4.

<sup>97</sup> Ernest Howard Crosby, *Tolstoy and His Message* (BoondocksNet Edition), available from <http://www.boondocksnet.com/editions/tolstoy/index.html> (accessed 18 August 2003), chap. 4, para. 29-30.

<sup>98</sup> Gandhi, quoted in Myers, *Binding the Strong Man*, 286.

<sup>99</sup> Of this willingness to die, Andrews comments: "Someone dying for a cause doesn't make it right. But a manifesto of love, written in blood, cannot be easily dismissed." Andrews, *Plan Be*, 63.

<sup>100</sup> Tolstoy, *What I Believe*, 15.

<sup>101</sup> Maude, *The Life of Tolstoy*, 33.

<sup>102</sup> Tolstoy, *What I Believe*, 19.

<sup>103</sup> Tolstoy, *What I Believe*, 18-19.

When he asked his disciples not to resist evil, Jesus meant it. Moreover, as Chapter 2 illustrates, Jesus practiced what he preached both throughout his life and in his very death.<sup>104</sup>

So, to repeat and sum up, Jesus says (according to Tolstoy): “The teaching of the world is that men should do evil to one another, but my teaching is that they should love one another.”<sup>105</sup> Jesus rejects the violence of the world by preaching non-resistance. His teaching overcomes the cycle of violence by refusing to resist. A faithful follower of Jesus – a Christian – t

### **.1.6 – Anarchist implications**

State theory and practice, however, reveal an attitude at odds with this fundamental teaching of Jesus. Put simply, the state is founded on violence. In order for it to enforce law and order, the state demands from its citizens a monopoly over the legitimate use of force.<sup>106</sup> Hence coercion is essential to government.<sup>107</sup> The famous “social contract” postulated by Hobbes, Locke and (to a lesser extent) Rousseau rests precisely on the (hypothetical) consent, by a group of individuals, to grant the state a monopoly over the legitimate use of violence – allegedly to preserve order and security in an otherwise chaotic and sinful world.<sup>108</sup> For Hennacy, this means that “all governments – even the best – were founded upon the policemen’s club: upon a return of evil for evil, the very opposite of the teachings of Christ.”<sup>109</sup> The state is founded on the very thing Jesus prohibits.

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<sup>104</sup> Tolstoy, *What I Believe*, 43.

<sup>105</sup> Tolstoy, “The Gospel in Brief,” 297.

<sup>106</sup> This notion of the state as the monopoly of the use of force over a certain territory is obviously very similar to Weber’s definition of the state. Kinna, *Anarchism*, 46.

<sup>107</sup> For examples of Christian anarchists making this point that the state is based on violence, on a monopoly over the legitimate use of force, see [Anonymous], *Ninety-Five Theses in Defense of Patriarchy*, thesis 12; Ballou, *Non-Resistance in Relation to Human Governments*, 3; Barr, *Radical Hope*, 9; Bartley, *Faith and Politics after Christendom*, 185; Carson, *Christians in Politics*, para. 59-61; Molnár, *A Study of Peter Chelčický’s Life*, 30, 95, 100; Hugh O. Pentecost, *Murder by Law*, available from <http://www.deadanarchists.org/Pentecost/murder.html> (accessed 22 November 2007); Redford, *Jesus Is an Anarchist*, 5-8; Tolstoy, “An Appeal to Social Reformers,” 57-61; Tolstoy, “The End of the Age,” 35; Tolstoy, “The Kingdom of God Is within You,” 209-212, 315; Vanwagenen, “An In -3; Roger Young, *A Plea to Christians: Reject the State!* (Strike the Root), available from <http://w -t -root.com/columns/Young/young3.html> (accessed 21 November 2007), para. 3.

<sup>108</sup> For a concise summary of “social contract” theory, see Cavanaugh, “The City,” 186-190. Incidentally, Ellul does not even agree with “social contract” theory that the state’s mandate comes from the people’s consent for it to rule over them. Instead he thinks that “the state is legitimized when the other states recognise it” – t

. Ellul, *Violence*, 84. This view is also espoused by Charles Tilly who, while not an anarchist himself, has written a paper which many anarchists think highly of: Charles Tilly, “War Making and State Making as Organized Crime,” in *Bringing the State Back In*, ed. Peter Evans, Dietrich Rueschemeyer, and Theda Skocpol (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 171.

<sup>109</sup> Hennacy, *The Book of Ammon*, 62.

Christian anarchists reject the differentiation between “violence,” with its negative connotations, and the state’s use of “force.”<sup>110</sup> Ellul writes:

I refuse to make the classic distinction between violence and force. The lawyers have invented the idea that when the state applies constraint, even brutal constraint, it is exercising “force;” that only individuals or nongovernmental groups (syndicates, parties) use violence. This is a totally unjustified distinction. The state is established by violence – t

-to-day administration of government whenever “force” is involved. Ellul thus speaks of “administrative violence” and the “violence of the judicial system.”<sup>112</sup> The state, he therefore insists, “cannot maintain itself save by and through violence.”<sup>113</sup>

The resulting tragedy is that although the state promises to protect from evil, it itself “produces evil and extends it,” says Berdyaev.<sup>114</sup> Civil law, according to Chelčický, “encourages a continuing fall of man,” because it “perpetuates lawsuits, punishments, and revenge: it returns evil for evil.”<sup>115</sup> For Christian anarchists, law is thus an inadequate and unchristian response to violence since it is itself another form of violence.

The state is also more visibly violent and therefore unchristian in another way: it wages war.<sup>116</sup> In doing so, it breaks not only Jesus’ instruction not to resist evil, but also one of the much older Ten Commandments, namely: “Thou shalt not kill.”<sup>117</sup> Chelčický believes this was an “absolute” command which “God never revoked.”<sup>118</sup> Yet as Berdyaev remarks, “murder is committed in an organized way and upon a colossal scale by the state.”<sup>119</sup> A letter to *A Pinch of Salt* notes that “states institutionalise killing by maintaining armed forces.”<sup>120</sup> The army’s institution attests to the state’s disregard for the commandment not to kill. It is the state’s killing machine, its ultimate tool with which to murder and resist evil.

Some might retort that a distinction should be made between murder and war. To those, Ballou asks rhetorically:

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<sup>110</sup> Similarly, Pentecost refuses not to call capital punishment murder. Pentecost, *Murder by Law*, para. 3.

<sup>111</sup> Ellul, *Violence*, 84. See also Goddard, *Living the Word, Resisting the World*, 169-170.

<sup>112</sup> Jacques Ellul, quoted in Goddard, *Living the Word, Resisting the World*, 50.

<sup>113</sup> Ellul, *Violence*, 84.

<sup>114</sup> Berdyaev, *The Realm of the Spirit and the Realm of Caesar*, 83.

<sup>115</sup> Molnár, *A Study of Peter Chelčický’s Life*, 99 (quoting Chelčický).

<sup>116</sup> For a short discussion of Tolstoy’s views on war, see Christoyannopoulos, “Leo Tolstoy on the State,” 24-25.

<sup>117</sup> Exodus 20:13. This passage is also quoted to make this point in William Van Wagenen, “War and the State,” *The Mormon Worker*, issue 1, September 2007, available from [http://www.\\_\\_\\_\\_\\_/a\\_\\_\\_\\_\\_issue1.pdf](http://www._____/a_____issue1.pdf) (accessed 28 February 2008), 9.

<sup>118</sup> Respectively: Brock, *The Political and Social Doctrines*, 60; Molnár, *A Study of Peter Chelčický’s Life*, 14 (quoting Chelčický).

<sup>119</sup> Berdyaev, “Personality, Religion, and Existential Anarchism,” 159. A similar point is made in Llewellyn H. Rockwell, Jr., *What Moral Rules Bind the State?*, available from <http://www.lewrockwell.com/rockwell/moralrules.html> (accessed 21 November 2007), para. 7.

<sup>120</sup> Frits ter Kuile, “Anarcho Theologie,” *A Pinch of Salt*, issue 12, March 1989, 16.

How many does it take to metamorphose wickedness into righteousness? One man must not kill. If he does it is murder. Two, ten, one hundred men acting on their own responsibility must not kill. If they do it is still murder. But a state or nation may kill as many as it pleases and it is no murder. It is just, necessary, commendable, and right. Only get people enough to agree to it, and the butchery of myriads of human beings is perfectly innocent. But how many men does it take?<sup>121</sup>

Christian anarchists see no valid reason to distinguish between people acting on their own and people doing the same thing through the state. Christian commands apply in both cases. Hennacy even finds support on this in Pope Benedict XV, who he quotes as having said that “The Gospel command of love applies between states just as it does between individual men.”<sup>122</sup>

Both at home and abroad, then, the state directly contravenes the relation between the individual and the state. I. Hennacy affirms that “all government denies the Sermon on the Mount by a return of evil for evil in legislatures, courts, prisons, and war.”<sup>123</sup> Of his own (American) government, he says that it “represents the largest single example of the organised return of evil for evil, both in foreign relations and in domestic affairs.”<sup>124</sup> Through war and capital punishment, the state responds to evil with murder. A Christian should neither kill nor resist evil, yet the state does both.

Moreover, as Ballou explains, “what [a man] does through others he really does himself.”<sup>125</sup> Therefore human beings might find themselves resisting injury with injury “as constituent supporters of human government.”<sup>126</sup> That is, if a political compact [...] requires, authorizes, provides for, or tolerates war, bloodshed, capital punishment, slavery, or any kind of absolute injury, offensive or defensive, the man who swears, affirms or otherwise pledges himself, to support such a compact [...] is just as responsible for every act of injury done in strict conformity thereto, as if he himself personally committed it.<sup>127</sup>

When the state resists evil, its citizens who have consented to it holding power to resist evil are just as responsible for its behaviour as they would be if they had resisted evil themselves. What the state commits with my implicit or explicit consent, I am doing myself through it.

To put it as mildly as a contributor to *A Pinch of Salt*, the renunciation of violence taught by Jesus therefore “places a massive question [mark] against any use of violence by Christians or any approval of social structures which themselves embody the legitimization of the use of violence and coercion within territorial bounds – like states.”<sup>128</sup> Christians should neither coerce fellow human beings nor empower others to do so through legislation.<sup>129</sup> It is because of this

<sup>121</sup> Ballou, quoted in Tolstoy, “The Kingdom of God Is within You,” 13.

<sup>122</sup> Benedict XV, quoted in Hennacy, *The Book of Ammon*, 373.

<sup>123</sup> Hennacy, *The Book of Ammon*, 124.

<sup>124</sup> Hennacy, *The Book of Ammon*, 259.

<sup>125</sup> Ballou, “A Catechism of Non-Resistance,” 16.

<sup>126</sup> Ballou, *Christian Non-Resistance*, chap. 1, para. 51.

<sup>127</sup> Ballou, *Christian Non-Resistance*, chap. 1, para. 53.

<sup>128</sup> David Mumford, “The Bible and Anarchy,” *A Pinch of Salt*, issue 14, March 1990, 8.

<sup>129</sup> Ballou, *Christian Non-Resistance*, chap. 7.

absolute commitment to non-violence that Christian anarchists refuse to endorse the institution and conduct of the state.<sup>130</sup>

Moreover and for the same reasons, Christian anarchists reckon that a true Christian cannot use courts of law to seek redress. Ballou explains that Jesus' instruction "forbids not merely all personal, individual, self-assumed right of retaliation, but all revenge at law."<sup>131</sup> According to Tolstoy, if any use of force is forbidden, then so are "all legal proceedings in which force is actually or implicitly employed to oblige any of those concerned [...] to be present and take part."<sup>132</sup> Aylmer Maude (Tolstoy's friend, biographer and translator) thus concludes that "This teaching involves nothing less than the entire abolition of all compulsory legislation, Law Courts, police, and prisons, as well as all forcible restraint of man by man."<sup>133</sup> Christianity, that is, involves anarchism.

Hennacy therefore concludes that "Anarchism is the negative side" of "Pacifism and the Sermon on the Mount."<sup>134</sup> According to Christian anarchists, anarchism is closer to the "social order" envisaged by Jesus than any alternative "of which force is a component."<sup>135</sup> They believe Christian anarchism to be "an inevitable corollary of Christian pacifism."<sup>136</sup> It is because it returns evil for evil that Hennacy would abolish the state.<sup>137</sup> It is because he thought that "the very existence of governments and state apparatuses [make] domestic violence and international war inevitable" that Tolstoy was an anarchist.<sup>138</sup> It is because they take Jesus' words in the Sermon on the Mount literally, and because they consider the state to be, both in theory and practice, in flagrant contravention of these, that Christian anarchists believe anarchism to be an inevitable corollary of Christianity.

Brock explains that, "like other anarchists," Christian anarchists such as Tolstoy "wished to base the organization of society on consent, on cooperation, and not on force."<sup>139</sup> Christian anarchists do not envision a chaotic society, but an organised one based on real consent, love and mutual help rather than the fictional granting of the legitimacy of violence to some monstrous Leviathan. Quite what such a society would look like is discussed in Chapter 5.

Guseinov observes about Tolstoy's anarchism that "one cannot deny his consistency."<sup>140</sup> Christian anarchists move in consistent logical steps from Jesus' command not to resist evil, through their assessment of state violence in

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<sup>130</sup> [Anonymous], *The Christmas Conspiracy*.

<sup>131</sup> Ballou, *Non-Resistance in Relation to Human Governments*, 12.

<sup>132</sup> Maude, *The Life of Tolstoy*, 36.

<sup>133</sup> Maude, *The Life of Tolstoy*, 36. See also: Crosby, *Tolstoy and His Message*, chap. 4; Tolstoy, *What I Believe*, 40-41.

<sup>134</sup> Hennacy, *The Book of Ammon*, 99.

<sup>135</sup> Evacustes A. Phipson, "A Happier Social Order," *A Pinch of Salt*, issue 14, March 1990, 10.

<sup>136</sup> Note that Peter Brock was using this turn of phrase to express a slightly different point. The full sentence reads: "We may agree that anarchism is not an inevitable corollary of Christian pacifism; yet it appears, at least to me, as an essential element of Tolstoyism." Brock, *Pacifism in Europe to 1914*, 459.

<sup>137</sup> Hennacy, *The Book of Ammon*, 123.

<sup>138</sup> Brock, *Pacifism in Europe to 1914*, 460.

<sup>139</sup> Brock, *The Roots of War Resistance*, 73.

<sup>140</sup> Guseinov, "Faith, God, and Nonviolence in the Teachings of Lev Tolstoy," 100. Aylmer Maude makes a similar point in Maude, *The Life of Tolstoy*, 57.

both theory and practice, to their ultimate rejection of the state. Tolstoy encapsulates the apparent simplicity of this logic in an often quoted syllogism of his: “Government is violence, Christianity is meekness, non-resistance, love. And, therefore, government cannot be Christian, and a man who wishes to be a Christian must not serve government.”<sup>141</sup>

So, according to Tolstoy, every would-be Christian faces a choice: God or the state, Jesus’ teaching and example or state theory and practice. It is “impossible,” he says, “at one and the same time to confess the God-Christ, the foundation of whose teaching is non-resistance to evil, and yet consciously and calmly labour for the establishment of property, tribunals, kingdoms, and armies.”<sup>142</sup> He further believes that this choice is inevitable, that every single person must decide where they stand on this issue.<sup>143</sup> He writes:

Perhaps Christianity may be obsolete, and when choosing between the two – Christianity and love or the State and murder – the people of our time will conclude that the existence of the State and murder is so much more important than Christianity, that we must forego Christianity and retain only what is more important: the State and murder.

That may be so – a . . . But in that case they should say so!<sup>144</sup>

People should openly admit to have chosen what they have chosen and not pretend they have been able to combine the two, because each of these alternatives directly repudiates the other. It is either Christianity, or the state.

Further Christian anarchist criticisms of the state (including state violence) are outlined in Chapter 3. W

If the

state cannot but be violent, then in preaching non-resistance to evil, Jesus prescribes a form of anarchism.

## 1.2 – Judge not

Anarchism follows not just from non-resistance to evil, but also from other key passages in the Sermon on the Mount. One such passage, which Tolstoy frequently analyses alongside the commandment not to resist evil, is where Jesus says the following:

1. Judge not, that ye be not judged.
2. For with what judgement ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured unto you again.
3. And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother’s eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?

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<sup>141</sup> Leo Tolstoy, "Letter to Dr. Eugen Heinrich Schmitt," in *Tolstoy's Writings on Civil Disobedience and Non-Violence*, trans. Aylmer Maude (New York: Bergman, 1967), 129.

<sup>142</sup> Tolstoy, *What I Believe*, 22.

<sup>143</sup> Tolstoy, *What I Believe*, 26-27.

<sup>144</sup> Tolstoy, "Address to the Swedish Peace Congress in 1909," 540.



4. Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye?
5. Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye.<sup>145</sup>

Tolstoy explains Jesus to here be saying to his disciples: "You cannot judge, for all men are blind and do not see the truth. [...] And those who judge and punish are like blind men leading the blind."<sup>146</sup> Moreover, "[men] cannot judge one another's faults because they are themselves full of wickedness."<sup>147</sup> Since no human being is faultless, castigating other persons for their faults is both ill-advised and hypocritical.

This, in turn, further explains why men should not resist evil. The two injunctions are connected in that since "every man is full of faults and incapable of guiding others," men should not condemn, take revenge or resist evil.<sup>148</sup> Because one cannot judge evil properly in the first place, to act upon that judgement by resisting the alleged evil is unwise. Instead of judging, Christian should patiently forgive even what to them looks evil. Ballou writes that true followers of Christ "deem it their duty to forgive, not punish – to yield unto wrath and suffer wrong, without recompensing evil for evil, referring their cause always unto Him who has said, 'Vengeance is mine; I will repay.'"<sup>149</sup>

These words which Ballou quotes come from Paul's Epistle to the Romans.<sup>150</sup> They refer back to the Old Testament, but Christian anarchists sometimes mention Old Testament passages in their interpretation of Jesus' instruction not to judge.<sup>151</sup> While interpreting a passage from Isaiah, for instance, Eller argues that "There is only One who is qualified to serve as Judge of all the earth, who not only can say what justice is but also is capable of bringing it to be the actual state of affairs."<sup>152</sup> True justice, Eller argues, can only be brought about by "Judge Jehovah," so "we would better let God do it his way from the outset."<sup>153</sup> The Christian who has faith in God must also have faith in God's judgement and in his execution of justice, which is also why he should abstain from impersonating God and judging his fellow human beings.

Men are ill-equipped to make laws and judge other men as good or wicked, let alone punish them for it. Hence, while an omniscient God can punish evil-doers, "it is not to be done by men to men, and the Son of God has bid men not to do it."<sup>154</sup> Judgement is God's prerogative.<sup>155</sup> Hence Jesus clearly forbade human judgment. However startling this may seem, Tolstoy therefore insists that Jesus' instruction not to judge further condemns all earthly tribunals: if we are not

<sup>145</sup> Matthew 7:1-5 (King James Version's italics removed).

<sup>146</sup> Tolstoy, "The Gospel in Brief," 165-166. See also: Tolstoy, "The Gospel in Brief," 288.

<sup>147</sup> Tolstoy, "The Gospel in Brief," 288.

<sup>148</sup> Tolstoy, "The Gospel in Brief," 269. See also Tolstoy, "The Gospel in Brief," 288; Tolstoy, *What I Believe*, 41, 215.

<sup>149</sup> Ballou, *Non-Resistance in Relation to Human Governments*, 10-11.

<sup>150</sup> Romans 12:19.

<sup>151</sup> Besides Ballou and Eller, see also Craig and Ellul: [Anonymous], *Ninety-Five Theses in Defense of Patriarchy*, thesis 80; Ellul, *Violence*, 174.

<sup>152</sup> Eller, *Christian Anarchy*, 257 (emphasis removed).

<sup>153</sup> Eller, *Christian Anarchy*, 254, 256.

<sup>154</sup> Tolstoy, *What I Believe*, 64.

<sup>155</sup> Guseinov, "Faith, God, and Nonviolence in the Teachings of Lev Tolstoy," 100.

supposed to judge and condemn our fellows, then neither can that be done through courts of justice.<sup>156</sup> Our judicial system is unchristian not only because it resists evil, but also because it involves judging – both forbidden by Jesus. As a result, a Christian can neither be a judge, nor take part in any trial, nor take a fellow human being to court.<sup>157</sup> Christians must stay clear of human courts.<sup>158</sup>

Tolstoy usually discusses the instructions not to resist evil and not to judge together, because even though they have a slightly different focus, they both condemn the state's resistance to what it has judged to be evil. To judge and to resist are different acts, but they are related, especially in the state. The former places more emphasis on legislation and the judicial system, the latter on the police force and the army. Either way, they both criticise functions of the state which are fundamental to its existence. They both inform the Christian anarchist position.

### 1.3 – Love your enemies

Another instruction from the Sermon on the Mount which Christian anarchists interpret as implying a critique of the state comes right after the verses on non-resistance. Here, Jesus says:

43. Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy.
44. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;
45. That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.
46. For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same?
47. And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so?
48. Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.<sup>159</sup>

Christian anarchists and pacifists develop two overlapping lines of interpretation on these verses: one of these focuses on the implied condemnation of patriotism and war; the other argues that loving one's enemy is the litmus test of Christianity.

Tolstoy concentrates on the condemnation of patriotism and war. He admits to have been initially puzzled by the commandment, because it appears to be “an unattainable moral ideal,” and because unusually, Jesus is not quoting the Old Testament “with verbal exactness” but using words “which were never spoken.”<sup>160</sup> Tolstoy then realised, however, that “‘neighbour’ in the Jewish

<sup>156</sup> For a detailed discussion of this, see Tolstoy, *What I Believe*, chap. 3.

<sup>157</sup> Crosby, *Tolstoy and His Message*, chap. 4; Tolstoy, *What I Believe*, 31, 215.

<sup>158</sup> Redford, *Jesus Is an Anarchist*, 44-45.

<sup>159</sup> Matthew 5:43-48 (King James Version's italics removed).

<sup>160</sup> Tolstoy, *What I Believe*, 88-89.

tongue simply meant a Jew,” as parallel passages in the Bible indeed confirmed.<sup>161</sup> Likewise, Tolstoy explains, “The word ‘enemy’ is seldom used in the Gospels in a private or personal sense, but almost always in a public and national one.”<sup>162</sup> Both Penner and Ballou agree, and add that Jesus is here deliberately reinterpreting the Old Testament notions of “neighbour” and “enemy.”<sup>163</sup> Indeed for Ballou, these notions had been misapprehended, and Jesus in fact draws out their “true” and intended meaning.<sup>164</sup> Tolstoy thus concludes that in these verses,

All the passages, spread over the different books of the Scriptures, in which it is prescribed to the Jews to oppress, slay, and destroy other nations, are brought together by Jesus into one saying, “Thou shalt hate or do evil to thine enemy.” He says, “You have been told to love your own people, and to hate the enemy of your race, but I tell you to love all without distinction of nationality.”<sup>165</sup>

According to Tolstoy, Jesus simply tells us to love people of other nations as well as our own countrymen. He says: “If you are attached only to your own countrymen, remember that all men are attached to their own countrymen, and wars result from that.”<sup>166</sup> The “snare,” Tolstoy explains, arises from the “false belief” that one’s good is bound up with the good of one’s countrymen, “and not, as it is really, with the good of all men on earth.”<sup>167</sup>

Yet if the new rule is “to make no difference between our own and other nations,” then this rule also requires “never to act in conformity with such a difference, that is, never to provoke or take part in war, and to treat all men of what nationality soever as though they belonged to our own.”<sup>168</sup> Any manifestation of lower feelings towards foreigners compared to one’s own nationals being outlawed, anything that incites such differentiation must also be forbidden. Hence, to the extent that the state takes part in war, provokes it or otherwise differentiates between “us” and “them,” it is behaving in an unchristian manner.

For Tolstoy, therefore, Jesus is also ultimately outlawing patriotism. As Chapter 3 discusses in more detail, Tolstoy refuses to accept that there might be a good kind of patriotism, because Jesus’ teaching unequivocally condemns all favouritism towards one’s countrymen. For Tolstoy, Jesus says: “Treat foreigners as I have told you to treat one another. To the Father of all men there are no

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<sup>161</sup> Tolstoy, *What I Believe*, 90.

<sup>162</sup> Tolstoy, *What I Believe*, 90-91.

<sup>163</sup> Ballou, *Christian Non-Resistance*, chap. 1-2; Penner, *The New Testament*, t-46.

<sup>164</sup> Ballou, *Christian Non-Resistance*, chap. 1, para. 66.

<sup>165</sup> Tolstoy, *What I Believe*, 91 (emphasis removed). Ballou makes the same point about how Jesus is condensing several Old Testament passages, but in more detail and by giving examples of some such passages: Ballou, *Christian Non-Resistance*, chap. 2, para. 33-43.

<sup>166</sup> Tolstoy, “The Gospel in Brief,” 166.

<sup>167</sup> Tolstoy, *What I Believe*, 215. A good study of the birth and development of the concepts of race and nation and their contrast to the Christian ideal can be found in Nekeisha Alexis-Baker, “The Church as Resistance to Racism and Nation: A Christian, Anarchist Perspective,” in *Religious Anarchism: New Perspectives*, ed. Alexandre J. M. E. Christoyannopoulos (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009).

<sup>168</sup> Tolstoy, *What I Believe*, 92.

separate nations or separate kingdoms: all are brothers, all sons of one Father. Make no distinctions among people as to nations and kingdoms.”<sup>169</sup> Tolstoy interprets the Parable of the Good Samaritan as being precisely about treating foreigners as neighbours.<sup>170</sup> A Christian should “do good to all men without distinction.”<sup>171</sup> Whenever the state stirs up patriotism and national preferences, it is thereby disobeying yet another of Jesus’ instructions.

Moreover, Chelčický argues, “Wars and other kinds of murder have their beginning in the hatred of the enemy and in the unwillingness to be patient with evil.”<sup>172</sup> Therefore “if Christians really believed in this commandment of love, [...] the sword would immediately fall from their hands, all conflicts and wars would cease among them [...]; and should they be hurt and oppressed by others, they would not strike back with their sword but patiently suffer all evil.”<sup>173</sup> Many Christian theologians have tried to argue that love of enemy does not prevent killing, as long as one’s inner disposition is one of love and charity; but as Chapter 3 shows, Christian anarchists have no time for these arguments, which they consider to be both pure hypocrisy and a betrayal of Jesus.<sup>174</sup> For them, conflicts continue to plague the world “because men do not trust the Son of God enough to abide by his commandments.”<sup>175</sup>

Christian anarchists believe that true Christians have the faith and the courage to do what Jesus demands. Love of enemies might be very difficult, but that only makes it an even more revealing criterion to identify genuine followers of Jesus. According to Chelčický, “The whole test of a Christian comes to this: is he willing to love his enemies?”<sup>176</sup> Wink says that this is “the litmus test of authentic Christian faith.”<sup>177</sup> Of course, it is not easy: it calls to love “even the ones who have caused the greatest pain by taking precious life,” because such love “does not depend upon the nature or ‘lovableness’ of the object of love.”<sup>178</sup> It is not easy. But it is what Jesus asked his followers to do.

Besides, “love of enemies is based on imitation of God.”<sup>179</sup> As Jesus himself makes clear, it imitates God’s love for all – good or evil – in his Creation. That, Yoder argues, is the sense in which Jesus’ instruction to be “perfect” as God is “perfect” should be understood. He explains:

we are asked to “resemble God” just at this one point: not in His omnipotence or His eternity or His impeccability, but simply in the indiscriminating or unconditional character of His love. This is not a fruit of

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<sup>169</sup> Tolstoy, “The Gospel in Brief,” 166-167.

<sup>170</sup> Tolstoy, “The Gospel in Brief,” 229-230. (Luke 10:25-37)

<sup>171</sup> Tolstoy, “The Gospel in Brief,” 288.

<sup>172</sup> Molnár, *A Study of Peter Chelčický's Life*, 135 (quoting Chelčický). See also [Anonymous], *Ninety-Five Theses in Defense of Patriarchy*, thesis 48.

<sup>173</sup> Molnár, *A Study of Peter Chelčický's Life*, 134 (quoting Chelčický).

<sup>174</sup> For some examples of such theological arguments, see Laurie Johnston, “Love Your Enemies – Even in the Age of Terrorism?,” *Political Theology* 6/1 (2005); McLellan, ed., *Political Christianity*, 52.

<sup>175</sup> Molnár, *A Study of Peter Chelčický's Life*, 135 (quoting Chelčický).

<sup>176</sup> Molnár, *A Study of Peter Chelčický's Life*, 134 (paraphrasing Chelčický).

<sup>177</sup> Wink, *Jesus' Third Way*, 49.

<sup>178</sup> Scott Langley, “End the Death Penalty Now!,” *The Catholic Worker*, issue 73, May 2006, 3; Penner, *The New Testament, the Christian, and the State*, 46.

<sup>179</sup> Johnston, “Love Your Enemies – Even in the Age of Terrorism?,” 88.

long growth and maturation; it is not inconceivable or impossible. We can do it tomorrow if we believe. We can stop loving only the lovable, lending only to the reliable, giving only to the grateful, as soon as we grasp and are grasped by the unconditionality of the benevolence of God. "There must be no limit to your goodness, as your heavenly Father's goodness knows no bounds."<sup>180</sup>

Hence according to Yoder, "the perfection to which Jesus calls his hearers [...] is not flawlessness or impeccability, but precisely the refusal to discriminate between friend and enemy, the in and the out, the good and the evil."<sup>181</sup> It is easy to love our friends. What Jesus taught and lived, however, was to love and forgive both the good and the evil, just as God does.

Furthermore, just as non-resistance helps overcome the cycle of violence, love of enemies helps overcome the associated cycle of hatred.<sup>182</sup> Wink explains:

Love of enemies is the recognition that the enemy, too, is a child of God. The enemy too believes he or she is in the right, and fears us because we represent a threat against his or her values, lifestyle, and affluence. When we demonize our enemies, calling them names and identifying them with absolute evil, we deny that they have that of God within them which still makes transformation possible.<sup>183</sup>

The challenge, he therefore suggests, is to "find God in my enemy."<sup>184</sup> That is the only way to convert someone else to one's cause, because "no one can show others the error that is within them, as Thomas Merton wisely remarked, unless the others are convinced that their critic first sees and loves the good that is within them."<sup>185</sup> Love of enemies opens the possibility of reconciliation.

This obviously relates to the above discussion of ends and means. Enmity stirs up more enmity and hence perpetuates itself in a vicious circle. Laurie Johnston suggests that "the real enemy is not any human person or group, but rather *enmity itself*."<sup>186</sup> To overcome the vicious circle, enmity must be dried up in the heart, by cultivating love. In the long run, by such love, enmity will be overcome: "Love your enemies and you will have none."<sup>187</sup>

The state, however, does none of that. It treats its nationals differently to foreigners. It stirs up patriotism, prepares for war and goes to war. It discriminates between good and evil domestically. It institutionalises love of friends and hatred of enemies. It does not even try to pretend to mirror God's

<sup>180</sup> Yoder, "The Political Axioms of the Sermon on the Mount," 48.

<sup>181</sup> Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus*, 225 (footnote 216). See also Andrews, *Plan Be*, 45-49; Jarrod McKenna, "Be Purple! And Other Unhelpful Commands," in *Plan Be: Be the Change You Want to See in the World*, by Dave Andrews (Milton Keynes: Authentic, 2008).

<sup>182</sup> Berdyaev, *The Realm of the Spirit and the Realm of Caesar*, 89.

<sup>183</sup> Wink, *Jesus' Third Way*, 49.

<sup>184</sup> Wink, *Jesus' Third Way*, 49.

<sup>185</sup> Wink, *Jesus' Third Way*, 51.

<sup>186</sup> Johnston, "Love Your Enemies – Even in the Age of Terrorism?," 104.

<sup>187</sup> Tolstoy reports that this is said in *Teaching of the Twelve Apostles*, but he gives no reference details for these words to be traced back to their original source. Leo Tolstoy, "Bethink Yourselves!," in *Recollections and Essays*, trans. Aylmer Maude (London: Oxford University Press, 1937), 250.

unconditional love for all. For Christian anarchists, therefore, on this account as well, the state is an unchristian institution.

## 1.4 – Swear not at all

There is another, must simpler way in which the state contravenes one of Jesus' instructions from the Sermon on the Mount. It concerns swearing and oath taking, a topic on which Jesus says the following:

33. Again, ye have heard that it hath been said of them of old time, Thou shalt not foreswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths:
34. But I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven; for it is God's throne:
35. Nor by the earth; for it is his footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King.
36. Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black.
37. But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil.<sup>188</sup>

Tolstoy is the only Christian anarchist to discuss in detail this instruction's implication for the state. So even though other Christian anarchists, such as Ballou and Chelčický, come to the same conclusion, it is Tolstoy's exegesis that will be followed here.<sup>189</sup>

Tolstoy begins by stating that unlike some of the other instructions of Jesus, this one only troubled him "by its clearness, by its simplicity and easiness."<sup>190</sup> Jesus simply enjoins his followers never to swear, in other words never to bind themselves to any oaths. Why would Jesus command this? Tolstoy explains: "If it be the teaching of Jesus that one should always fulfil the will of God, how can a man swear to fulfil the will of a fellow-man? The will of God may not accord with the will of a man."<sup>191</sup> It is impossible to know in advance what will be required by the Christian demands to love and forgive, hence one should not bind oneself with an oath that may compel to act against the will of God. For this reason, Tolstoy writes, "every oath is an evil."<sup>192</sup> He insists that "For a Christian to promise obedience to men or to laws made by men is as though a workman, having hired out to one master, should at the same time promise to carry out any order given him by someone else. Man cannot serve two masters."<sup>193</sup> It is impossible to swear allegiance to the state at the same time commit oneself to follow Jesus. Swearing was therefore condemned by Jesus.

Tolstoy believes that his reading is further confirmed by several other passages in the New Testament. For instance, he draws attention to the Epistle of James.<sup>194</sup> There, James plainly reiterates Jesus' position: "But above all things,

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<sup>188</sup> Matthew 5:33-37.

<sup>189</sup> Ballou, *Christian Non-Resistance*, chap. 7; Brock, *The Political and Social Doctrines*, 56.

<sup>190</sup> Tolstoy, *What I Believe*, 81.

<sup>191</sup> Tolstoy, *What I Believe*, 83.

<sup>192</sup> Tolstoy, "The Gospel in Brief," 164.

<sup>193</sup> Tolstoy, "The Kingdom of God Is within You," 233.

<sup>194</sup> Tolstoy, *What I Believe*, 83-84.

my brethren, swear not, neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath: but let your yea be yea; and your nay, nay; lest ye fall into condemnation.”<sup>195</sup> This injunction seems as clear as Jesus’ – do not swear, ever.

Tolstoy also reads the episode of Peter’s three denials as a confirmation of this logic.<sup>196</sup> Peter initially assures Jesus that he will defend him, and Jesus, according to Tolstoy, replies that “A man cannot pledge himself to do anything.”<sup>197</sup> Sure enough, eventually, Peter repeatedly swears not to have known Jesus, and the cock crows. Peter should never have sworn, just as Jesus had warned him.

Tolstoy also links to this commandment the two passages on the payment of taxes which are discussed in detail in Chapter 4. In the temple tax episode, Jesus is asked whether everyone is bound to pay the taxes, to which in the Gospel according to Tolstoy, Jesus replies: “If we are sons of God we are bound to no one but God, and are free from obligations. But if they demand the tax from you, then pay: not that you are under obligation to do so but because you must not resist evil.”<sup>198</sup> Followers of Jesus must have no forsworn obligation to do what other men demand. Their sole allegiance is to God through Jesus.

Tolstoy lists the “render unto Caesar” passage immediately after this one, and portrays it as making the same point. He then has Jesus say: “Your Orthodox teachers go about everywhere making people swear and vow that they will fulfil the law. But by this they only pervert people.”<sup>199</sup> Those in authority seek to bind people into future allegiance, but this should be refused, “for every oath is extorted from men for evil purposes.”<sup>200</sup>

One such “evil purpose” is the establishment of state power. “Oath taking,” R. V. Sampson explains for Tolstoy, “is fundamental to military and therefore political power. The oath of allegiance creates the legal basis for the maintenance of the disciplined unity of large numbers of men, on which all State power ultimately rests.” Jesus’ saying, he therefore concludes, “indirectly [strikes] at the roots of Caesar’s military power.”<sup>201</sup> To refuse to swear oaths is to deny the state the basis of its power.

In *The Kingdom of God Is within You*, Tolstoy illustrates this process with a telling example, by quoting the words that Kaiser Wilhelm pronounced when addressing German soldiers:

“Recruits!” said he. “You have sworn fidelity to me before the altar and a minister of God. You are still too young to understand the full importance of what has been said here; but take care above all to obey the orders and instructions given you. You have sworn fidelity to me, lads of my Guard: that means that you are now my soldiers, that you have given yourselves to me, body and soul. For there is now but one enemy – me. In these days of socialistic sedition it may come to pass that I command you to fire on your own kindred your brothers, even your fathers and mothers – which

<sup>195</sup> James 5:12 (King James Version’s italics removed).

<sup>196</sup> Matthew 26:31-35, 69-75; Mark 14:27-30, 66-72; Luke 22:31-34, 55-62; John 13:36-38, 18:25-27.

<sup>197</sup> Tolstoy, “The Gospel in Brief,” 295.

<sup>198</sup> Tolstoy, “The Gospel in Brief,” 227. (Matthew 17:24-27.)

<sup>199</sup> Tolstoy, “The Gospel in Brief,” 228. (Matthew 22:15-22.)

<sup>200</sup> Tolstoy, *What I Believe*, 85.

<sup>201</sup> Both quotations in this paragraph are from Sampson, *Tolstoy*, 172.

God forbid – and even then it will be your duty to obey my orders without hesitation.”<sup>202</sup>

By swearing an oath of allegiance to the state, one becomes a tool of the state; and as the state’s tool, one will be forced to betray Christ.

It should be noted that the connivance of the clergy in swearing such deadly oaths of allegiance to the state was not missed by Tolstoy. Indeed, he laments that “In very truth the chief obstacle to understanding the law against the swearing of oaths, has been that so-called Christian teachers have boldly forced men to take oaths on the Gospel itself; in other words, have forced them to do by the Gospel what is contrary to the Gospel.”<sup>203</sup> For Tolstoy, “the snare arises from the name of God being used to *sanction* deceit.”<sup>204</sup> Terry Hopton explains that Tolstoy condemns the church’s involvement here because “such oaths appear to bind the individual to commit violence in God’s name, in absolute disobedience to His will.”<sup>205</sup> Swearing on the Bible is clearly inconsistent, therefore either candidly ill-advised or wilfully hypocritical. Chapter 3 returns to Tolstoy’s distrust of the church.

In any case, whenever the state requires oaths of allegiance from its citizens or soldiers, it breaches Jesus’ instruction. Jesus made clear that his followers should “say Yes when it is yes” and “No when it is no,” but that “every oath is evil.”<sup>206</sup> For Christian anarchists, whenever the state requires oaths of allegiance, it is unchristian – it is “evil.”

## 1.5 – The Golden Rule

Later in the Sermon, Jesus pronounces what is often described as (the Christian version of) t

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<sup>202</sup> Tolstoy, “The Kingdom of God Is within You,” 225 (Tolstoy’s emphasis).

<sup>203</sup> Tolstoy, *What I Believe*, 84-85.

<sup>204</sup> Tolstoy, *What I Believe*, 213 (Tolstoy’s emphasis).

<sup>205</sup> Hopton, “Tolstoy, God and Anarchism,” 37.

<sup>206</sup> Tolstoy, “The Gospel in Brief,” 164-165.

<sup>207</sup> Matthew 7:12. Concerning the Golden Rule, Dave Andrews refers to the 1993 Parliament of the World’s Religions to report that variants of it can be found in most other religions (there is no suggestion, therefore, that Jesus invented it), and that it is thus “a common ethic for peace.” Dave Andrews, *The Urgent Need for a Global Ethic*, available from <http://www.daveandrews.com.au/publications.html> (accessed 3 December 2006), 3. See also Andrews, *Plan Be*, 38-40. Tolstoy makes the same point frequently throughout his writings, as summarised in Guseinov, “Faith, God, and Nonviolence in the Teachings of Lev Tolstoy,” 100.

<sup>208</sup> Tolstoy, “The Gospel in Brief,” 167.

<sup>209</sup> Andrews, *Plan Be*, 4.



them, you can reasonably expect them to do to you in return. Hence do not resist, use violence, judge or bind others by oaths of allegiance if you do not want others to resist you, use violence against you, judge you or bind you by oaths of allegiance. Likewise, love your enemies if you want them to do the same. Love one another and love will eventually be returned to you.

A member of the Catholic Worker movement explains that this Golden Rule is “[at] the root of anarchist morality [...]. If you would not be exploited, then you must not exploit others. If you would not be ruled, then you must refuse to rule others.”<sup>210</sup> Yet because of its monopoly over the allegedly legitimate use of force, it is impossible for the state to abide by the Golden Rule, Redford argues, as by definition, this monopoly implies that “governments do to their subjects what they outlaw their subjects to do to them.”<sup>211</sup> Hennacy agrees that the Golden Rule accords with Christian anarchism, and contrasts it with “other systems of society” which “depend upon manmade laws and the violence of the State.”<sup>212</sup> To use violence, Tolstoy says, is “to do what he to whom violence is done does not wish,” and is therefore unchristian.<sup>213</sup> The Golden Rule thus implies a rejection of the state’s self-assumed right to coerce its citizens into submission.

## 1.6 – Reflections on other passages in the Sermon

The most important passages of the Sermon on the Mount for Christian anarchism have now been considered. Before discussing the extent to which Jesus breaks or fulfils the Old Law, it is worth noting in passing some of the comments which Christian anarchists make about other passages of the Sermon. These comments do not really bear directly upon their anarchist conclusions on the state as such, but they do hint at further criticisms of state and church officials.

### 1.6.1 – *Be not angry*

Two of Jesus’ five new commandments at the end of the fifth chapter of Matthew have been left out so far. The first of these is where Jesus instructs his followers not to be angry:

21. Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgement:
22. But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause<sup>214</sup> shall be in danger of the judgement: and whosoever shall say to

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<sup>210</sup> Robert Ellsberg, quoted in Segers, “Equality and Christian Anarchism,” 225.

<sup>211</sup> Redford, *Jesus Is an Anarchist*, 6.

<sup>212</sup> Hennacy, *The Book of Ammon*, 200.

<sup>213</sup> Leo Tolstoy, quoted in Guseinov, “Faith, God, and Nonviolence in the Teachings of Lev Tolstoy,” 100.

<sup>214</sup> “Without a cause” does not appear in the original Greek and has been withdrawn in most subsequent translations of the Bible. As discussed in Chapter 3, Christian anarchists believe that its insertion in the King James Version is an example of the way in which court translators and theologians have manipulated Jesus’ teaching to suit their own (unchristian) purposes.

his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire.

23. Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee;
24. Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.
25. Agree with thine adversary quickly, whiles thou art in the way with him; lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison.
26. Verily I say unto thee, Thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing.<sup>215</sup>

Christian anarchists (and pacifists) offer different reflections on this passage.

Yoder points out that the three punishments in verse twenty-t

1 act of killing to the judgemental attitude that precedes it. Ernest Crosby agrees: “the great evil is not killing but the anger against a brother.”<sup>217</sup> The implication for the state would be that it breaches Christian demands even before the act of killing (in war or capital punishment), when it passes judgement on the intended victim and thus starts rationalising its eventual murder.

Ellul argues that these verses confirm his view that “all kinds of violence are the same” – physical, economic or psychological.<sup>218</sup> According to Ellul, Jesus “declared that there is no difference between murdering a fellow man and being angry with him or insulting him.”<sup>219</sup> The state, for Ellul, is violent not just by military coercion, but also by economic injustice and by brainwashing and other forms of propaganda.<sup>220</sup>

Tolstoy draws parallels between these verses and some of the Gospel passages on forgiveness: when injured, we should cultivate forgiveness instead of letting anger overcome us, not least since we are so ill equipped to judge one another in the first place.<sup>221</sup> This subject is examined in Chapter 2.

Tolstoy also explores why Jesus is so disapproving of the words “Raca” and “fool.” He explains that “Raca” means “a man not worthy to be called a man,” a “lost man.”<sup>222</sup> According to Tolstoy, Jesus’ point is therefore to identify typical justifications for anger, such as calling the other a fool or a lost man.<sup>223</sup> The temptation of counting only a few other men as equal “and despising the rest as insignificant men of no account (raca), or as stupid and uneducated (fools),” is the chief cause of the separation of men, Tolstoy argues.<sup>224</sup> Jesus wants peace and equality among human beings and that is why he is frowning upon anger and

<sup>215</sup> Matthew 5:21-26.

<sup>216</sup> Yoder, “The Political Axioms of the Sermon on the Mount,” 50-51.

<sup>217</sup> Crosby, *Tolstoy and His Message*, chap. 4, para. 8.

<sup>218</sup> Ellul, *Violence*, 97.

<sup>219</sup> Ellul, *Violence*, 99.

<sup>220</sup> Ellul, *Violence*, 97-98.

<sup>221</sup> Tolstoy, “The Gospel in Brief,” 224-226, 286-287; Leo Tolstoy, “The Teaching of Jesus,” in *On Life and Essays on Religion*, trans. Aylmer Maude (London: Oxford University Press, 1934), 369.

<sup>222</sup> Tolstoy, *What I Believe*, 72.

<sup>223</sup> Tolstoy, *What I Believe*, 72-73.

<sup>224</sup> Tolstoy, *What I Believe*, 209.

discrimination, because, as Crosby argues, “brotherly love is [...] imperilled” by “standing aloof from others, by refusing to recognize them as equals.”<sup>225</sup> To the extent that the state creates and perpetuates discrimination, however, it is maintaining hierarchies which become easy justifications for anger and eventually murder.

It should be noted that not all Christian anarchists condemn anger outright. In Christian anarchist newspapers, for instance, while some see anger as “a tool of domination,” others believe that there is “a kind of anger that is healthy” which consists of a healthy concentration of energies, compared to “another kind of anger” which is dangerous because it is violent and murderous.<sup>226</sup> The intricacies of this distinction, however, are not fully articulated. Besides, this argument is not rooted in an exegesis of the above verses.

Andrews, however, quotes Stassen and Gushee to relay their point that Jesus does not actually command not to be angry (which indeed he does not, at least not as clearly as he spells out the ensuing commandments), that the statement is in fact “descriptive, not prescriptive, of ‘a vicious cycle that we often get stuck in.’”<sup>227</sup> This would of course resonate with the above discussion on the cycle of violence. Andrews also emphasises that Jesus was angry twice, and once called his opponents fools.<sup>228</sup> One of the two cited instances of that “anger” is the temple cleansing episode which is discussed in Chapter 2 – but it is worth noting that the Greek word for “anger” does not appear in that text. Nevertheless, the words for “anger” and “fool” do appear in the other two instances reported by Andrews: once, Jesus does “look with anger” at those who query his healing of a man on the Sabbath; and once, he does call scribes and Pharisees “fools.”<sup>229</sup> Twice, it seems, Jesus does not live up to what he seems to be preaching in this commandment.

Andrews argues that it is both “unrealistic” and “unbiblical” to understand Jesus as asking us never to be angry.<sup>230</sup> He believes that what Jesus is calling for is “self-restraint,” for an anger that is not “aggressive.”<sup>231</sup> He admits that “There is great danger in getting angry” because “we want to hit back at people” or “call them names.”<sup>232</sup> But, based on his translation of the Greek for “meekness” in the Beatitude concerning the meek, he believes that Jesus blesses those with “neither too much anger, nor too little anger, but just the right amount

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<sup>225</sup> Crosby, *Tolstoy and His Message*, chap. 4, para. 8. See also: Tolstoy, “The Gospel in Brief,” 163; Tolstoy, *What I Believe*, 73.

<sup>226</sup> Barbara Deming, “On Anger,” *A Pinch of Salt*, issue 1, September 1985, 10-11; Richard Hamilton, “Anger: An Anarchist Perspective,” *The Digger and Christian Anarchist*, issue 36, April 1990, 9.

<sup>227</sup> Andrews, *A Spiritual Framework for Ethical Reflection*, 4. Note that Andrews explains Stassen and Gushee’s thinking much better in Andrews, *Plan Be*, 46-51. For the source of Andrews’ argument, see, for instance, Stassen, *The Fourteen Triads of the Sermon on the Mount*; Stassen, *Living the Sermon on the Mount*, especially chap. 4; Stassen and Gushee, *Kingdom Ethics*, especially chap. 6.

<sup>228</sup> Andrews, *Plan Be*, 23-24 (where he also argues that Jesus was quite angry at the death of Lazarus); Andrews, *A Spiritual Framework for Ethical Reflection*, 4. (Matthew 21:12-17, 23:17; Mark 3:5; John 11.)

<sup>229</sup> Mark 3:5 and Matthew 23:17 respectively.

<sup>230</sup> Andrews, *Plan Be*, 46.

<sup>231</sup> Andrews, *Plan Be*, 7.

<sup>232</sup> Andrews, *Plan Be*, 23.

of righteous indignation to address any grievous wrong.”<sup>233</sup> The important thing, for him, is to channel this anger “constructively,” by practicing “proactive self-control by learning to ‘turn the other cheek.’”<sup>234</sup> For Andrews, therefore, the commandment not to be angry is not as clear as might first seem: Jesus is not outlawing anger but commending reconciliation, and he appears to consider some amount of anger legitimate as long as it is channelled constructively, with self-restraint and without ever returning evil for evil.

This apparent contradiction must here be left unresolved. Christian anarchists offer no solution other than Andrews’ contention that Jesus actually did not prescribe his followers not to be angry at all. That contention, however, is not unproblematic. On the face of it, and certainly according to other Christian anarchists, the phrasing of Jesus’ saying does suggest he is prescribing behaviour and not just describing vicious cycles – indeed, why describe the cycle if not also to at least implicitly point out a way to overcome it? Besides, in this section of the Sermon, Jesus is deliberately referring to ancient prescriptions, which he reviews and “fulfils” with what looks like another, modified, prescription. Here, then, Jesus apparently diagnoses anger as the source of this particular vicious cycle, and preaches reconciliation as a cure. If anger is not altogether condemned, it certainly seems to be frowned upon. Still, it may be that the emphasis is best placed more on promoting reconciliation than on reproving anger (Chapter 4 revisits this theme of reconciliation). Be that as it may, this difficulty does not impact much upon the Christian critique of the state as a violent and thus unchristian institution. It may be that Jesus twice failed to follow his own instructions, but that is of little consequence to his implied criticisms of the state – except that it allows the toleration of some righteous indignation in these criticisms.

### **1.6.2 – Commit no adultery**

This applies even more to the only other of the five commandments so far left out of the discussion, where Jesus says that adultery, which is forbidden, in fact begins in the heart.<sup>235</sup> Tolstoy is the only Christian anarchist to spend any time on this commandment. He reads it as implying both that one should only have one partner for life and that sensuality destroys the soul.<sup>236</sup> None of this has much relevance for Christian anarchism, except perhaps to the extent that he considered the church to have deliberately mistranslated the meaning of the original Greek to “pervert and conceal” Jesus’ teaching.<sup>237</sup> Tolstoy’s many criticisms of the church are addressed in Chapter 3. The verses on adultery, however, are of no significance for the Christian anarchist critique of the state.

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<sup>233</sup> Andrews, *Plan Be*, 22. (Matthew 5:5.)

<sup>234</sup> Andrews, *Plan Be*, 24-25.

<sup>235</sup> Matthew 5:27-32.

<sup>236</sup> Tolstoy, “The Gospel in Brief,” 163-164, 226-227, 287; Tolstoy, *What I Believe*, 73-81, 210-212.

For the evolution of Tolstoy’s view on marriage, see Greenwood, *Tolstoy*, chap. 15.

<sup>237</sup> Tolstoy, *What I Believe*, 80 (75-81 for the full explanation).

### 1.6.3 – Seek no praise

Towards the middle of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus makes some recommendations about almsgiving, praying and fasting, namely that these things should not be done so as to seek praise and recognition from the community.<sup>238</sup> Tolstoy simply repeats these remarks, but in a language that makes them refer even more obviously to church leaders, past *and present*.<sup>239</sup> Again, therefore, this is relevant for this book only as further criticism of the church. That is all Christian anarchists have to say about those verses.<sup>240</sup>

### 1.6.4 – The Beatitudes

The Beatitudes, with which the Sermon begins, also appear to amount to an (at the very least) indirect snipe at rich and comfortable church or state officials.<sup>241</sup> Christian anarchists, however, tend to cite these verses without spending any time articulating – t – lying this very criticism of public and ecclesiastical officials.<sup>242</sup> The only exception to this is Andrews, who spends a whole (but short) book on the Beatitudes – which he playfully calls “Be-Attitudes.”<sup>243</sup> He interprets these as a synopsis of the Sermon and of the attitudes which it calls Christians to adopt.<sup>244</sup> He summarises “the virtues that are blessed” in these Beatitudes as follows:

Focusing on the poor (not status or riches). *Humility*.

Grieving over the injustice in the world. *Empathy*.

Getting angry but not getting aggressive. *Self-restraint*.

Seeking for justice (not vengeance). *Righteousness*.

Extending compassion to all in need. *Mercy*.

Being wholehearted in a desire to do right. *Integrity*.

Working for peace in a world at war. *Non-violence*.

Suffering for just causes (patiently). *Perseverance*.<sup>245</sup>

Of course, in his interpretation of the first blessing, Andrews articulates in some detail the criticism of the rich and comfortable which other Christian anarchists

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<sup>238</sup> Matthew 6:1-16.

<sup>239</sup> Tolstoy, “The Gospel in Brief,” 167-168.

<sup>240</sup> Yoder does say a little bit more about the Lord’s Prayer (which is found in this part of the Sermon), by connecting it to the practice of the Jubilee year which he examines in considerable detail in his book. This has been left out here both because Yoder is really more of a Christian pacifist than a Christian anarchist, and because these thoughts have no immediate significance for an anarchist reading of the Sermon other than to question the private ownership of property (see Chapter 3). Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus*, 62-63.

<sup>241</sup> Matthew 5:3-12. (See also Luke 6:20-26.)

<sup>242</sup> See, for instance: [Anonymous], “He Has Scattered the Proud...” *A Pinch of Salt*, issue 5, December 1986, 5; Don Mathews, *A Catholic Looks at the State*, available from <http://www.lewrockwell.com/orig/mathews5.html> (accessed 21 November 2007), para. 5-7; Martin Newell, “Obituary: Peter Lumsdaine: An Unusual Disciple,” *The London Catholic Worker*, issue 21, Christmas 2007, 4-5; Tolstoy, “The Gospel in Brief,” 161-162; Van Wagenen, “War and the State,” 9. Mathews furthermore comments (in para. 6) that the Beatitudes “do not describe the sorts of people who are blessed but the spiritual disposition of the way of Christ,” and Newell writes (page 4) that “Woe to the rich” is “probably the least popular and least quoted phrase of the beatitudes.”

<sup>243</sup> Andrews, *Plan Be*.

<sup>244</sup> Andrews, *Plan Be*, 4.

<sup>245</sup> Andrews, *Plan Be*, 7 (he then spends the rest of the book teasing out those statements).

usually leave implicit – indeed he lists many of the other Gospel passages which he reads as similarly “uncompromising” on the subject.<sup>246</sup> For him, too many commentators omit the numerous passages in which Jesus confronts the political, economic and social injustice of his society.<sup>247</sup> Besides, Andrews regrets that the Beatitudes are rarely taken seriously or taught in churches.<sup>248</sup> For him, “To *quote* these Be-Attitudes is religious – but to *act* on them is revolutionary.”<sup>249</sup> In any case, the relevance of the Beatitudes for Christian anarchism mainly consists in providing more reasons to criticise rich and comfortable church and state elites.

### 1.6.5 – *Worry not about security*

Another passage of the Sermon which Christian anarchists often just cite without much elaboration is where Jesus points to the birds and the lilies and says that, like these, his disciples should not worry about what they will ea

lude a few comments with their quotations from these verses. Andrews, for example, says that “The issue is that we need to stop eating and drinking to excess, and to start hungering and thirsting for justice.”<sup>251</sup> Day interprets it to mean that people should not worry about security all the time – the very worry which leads them to further empower the state in the hope that it will guarantee this sought-after security.<sup>252</sup> Pentecost denounces a similar worry about the economy.<sup>253</sup> Others, like Tolstoy, simply repeat that we should not be afraid or anxious about the future when trying to live according to the Sermon on the Mount, because God will provide for us if we do live according to it.<sup>254</sup> For Christian anarchists, therefore, these verses imply that people should not worry about how to live in a stateless world. They should stop worrying about the future and focus first and foremost on doing God’s will.

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<sup>246</sup> Andrews, *Plan Be*, 9-14.

<sup>247</sup> This sentence is heavily paraphrased from Andrews, who writes: “Many people say that Jesus said a lot about love, but very little about political, economic and social justice. But Jesus constantly confronted the injustice in his society. The Synoptic Gospels record 40 instances – not counting parallel passages – of Jesus specifically and repeatedly confronting both Roman and Jewish authorities with the injustices they perpetrated in Israel.” Andrews, *Plan Be*, 33.

<sup>248</sup> Andrews, *Plan Be*, 4.

<sup>249</sup> Andrews, *Plan Be*, 66 (Andrews’ emphasis). Andrews says the same thing of “the sayings of Jesus” – rather than just the Beatitudes – in Andrews, *Not Religion, but Love*, 174.

<sup>250</sup> Matthew 6:19-34.

<sup>251</sup> Andrews, *Not Religion, but Love*, 93.

<sup>252</sup> Tom Cornell, *My Dorothy Day* (Casa Juan Diego), available from <http://www.cjd.org/paper/dday.html> (accessed 14 February 2007), para. 10.

<sup>253</sup> Hugh O. Pentecost, *A Gigantic Poorhouse*, available from

<http://www.deadanarchists.org/Pentecost/poorhouse.h> . 21.

<sup>254</sup> [Anonymous], “Letter,” *A Pinch of Salt*, issue 8, October 1987, 10; Tolstoy, “The Gospel in Brief,” 168-170, 270; Tolstoy, “The Teaching of Jesus,” 353-354. Yoder also relates this saying to the notion of the Jubilee, as with the Lord’s Prayer. Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus*, 61.

### 1.6.6 – *Be the salt and the light*

Finally, Christian anarchists also mention Jesus' comparison of his disciples with the "salt of the earth" and the "light of the world."<sup>255</sup> Yoder explains that "it is assumed that there should be something about the behaviour of His disciples which will communicate to the world around."<sup>256</sup> For Ballou, being the salt and the light means not waiting "till the bad cease from aggression" to be good, but "to suffer wrong rather than do wrong, 'to overcome evil with good.'"<sup>257</sup> The idea is that the disciples should be the medium by which the salt and the light, that is, the message of Jesus, should be brought to the world.<sup>258</sup> The disciples are the seeds of Christianity. The very title of *A Pinch of Salt* is indeed a direct reference to this.<sup>259</sup> Christians should therefore speak out and not shy away from denouncing the state when it behaves in an unchristian way.<sup>260</sup>

## 1.7 – Fulfilling the Old Law

Before this Chapter can be brought to a close, a more detailed discussion is required of one last passage from the Sermon on the Mount. That passage has been studied heavily by Christian theologians throughout the centuries, because it throws light upon the relation of the New Testament with the Old, upon the extent to which Jesus is transforming the Old Law with his instructions in the Sermon on the Mount. Just before Jesus enumerates his five reinterpretations, he says:

17. Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.
18. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.
19. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.
20. For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.<sup>261</sup>

Christian anarchists do not all understand these verses in exactly the same way. Taken together, and in light of the five instructions which follow, they make two broad sets of at first seemingly contradictory comments on those verses: they often insist that Jesus is still marking a break with the Old Testament, but they explain the way in which this nevertheless amounts to a fulfilment of it.

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<sup>255</sup> Matthew 5:13-16.

<sup>256</sup> Yoder, "The Political Axioms of the Sermon on the Mount," 41.

<sup>257</sup> Ballou, *Christian Non-Resistance*, chap. 4, para. 16.

<sup>258</sup> Baker alludes precisely to such witness in Baker, *Christi-Anarchy*, para. 14.

<sup>259</sup> The verse is referred to on the first page of most of the issues of the newspaper, and in case the message was missed, on the last page of the first issue is written in bold capitals: "you are the salt." *A Pinch of Salt*, issue 1, September 1985, 16.

<sup>260</sup> Hennacy also seems to be alluding to this passage – but if so, the reference is not made explicit – w

<sup>261</sup> Matthew 5:17-20 (King James Version's italics removed).

For a start, Elliott notes that in his ministry, Jesus “does not hesitate to break the Law and to encourage others to do so as well,” especially as regards what is permitted on the Sabbath.<sup>262</sup> Jesus might claim to be somehow fulfilling the Law, but he also makes a point of refusing to abide by what he sees as inauthentic strictures claimed to derive from it. Elliott goes even further: he argues that Jesus had to “[take] steps to avoid both the official condemnation and the public alienation which would occur if he were seen to be espousing radical ideas,” and that “Jesus’ strategy in this respect was publicly to declare that he was not concerned to change anything, but was, on the contrary, a staunch defender of orthodoxy.”<sup>263</sup> Yet at the same time, “in the verses which immediately follow these, Jesus takes some of the particular requirements of orthodoxy [...] and begins to radically reinterpret them.”<sup>264</sup> What Jesus means by “fulfilling” is therefore clearly not just some unquestioning obedience to what is presented as the Law. Jesus explicitly reviews five commands from the Old Law and reinterprets them in a new way.

“However salutary [the Mosaic] statute,” Ballou therefore claims, “the great Master of Christians has abrogated it.”<sup>265</sup> For example, “so far as Moses and his expounders enjoined the infliction of penal personal injuries in resistance of injuries, and for the suppression of evil doing, Jesus Christ prohibits the same.”<sup>266</sup> The prohibition of resistance to evil “is made precisely coextensive in all its bearings with the allowances and injunctions of the Olden Code.”<sup>267</sup> Jesus’ prohibition of oaths, resistance or hatred of enemies now applies to the very same extent that the older Law permitted them.

If this is not accepted, Ballou writes, and therefore if Jesus’ instructions are not seen as abrogating the commandments he relates them to, then Christians are faced with a clear contradiction over what Jesus forbids but the Old Law allows. Yet if so, Ballou continues, “is it not worth as much *for* non-resistance as *against* it?”<sup>268</sup> If there is a contradiction, then one reading is just as potentially valid as the other: the view that the Old Law takes primacy is no more justified than the view that Jesus abrogates it. Furthermore, those arguing that Jesus does not abrogate but confirm the Old Law would have to accept that

It would carry us back, and bind us hand and foot to Judaism, with its every *jot* and *tittle*. It would re-enact the whole ceremonial, as well as moral and penal code of the Mosaic dispensation! Circumcisions, sacrifices, and all the commandments, *least* as well and *greatest*, would be made binding on us.<sup>269</sup>

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<sup>262</sup> Elliott, *Freedom, Justice and Christian Counter-Culture*, 76.

<sup>263</sup> Elliott, *Freedom, Justice and Christian Counter-Culture*, 161.

<sup>264</sup> Elliott, *Freedom, Justice and Christian Counter-Culture*, 162.

<sup>265</sup> Ballou, *Non-Resistance in Relation to Human Governments*, 13. See also: Ballou, *Christian Non-Resistance*, chap. 2.

<sup>266</sup> Ballou, *Christian Non-Resistance*, chap. 2, para. 12. Garrison makes the same point: “We believe that the penal code of the old covenant, an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth, has been abrogated by Jesus Christ, and that under the new covenant the forgiveness instead of the punishment of enemies has been enjoined upon all his disciples in all cases whatsoever.” Garrison, “Declaration of Sentiments Adopted by the Peace Convention,” 7.

<sup>267</sup> Ballou, *Christian Non-Resistance*, chap. 2, para. 13.

<sup>268</sup> Ballou, *Christian Non-Resistance*, chap. 2, para. 27 (Ballou’s emphasis).

<sup>269</sup> Ballou, *Christian Non-Resistance*, chap. 2, para. 28 (Ballou’s emphasis).



If Jesus does not abrogate the Old Law, then Christians should abide by every single instruction of the Old Law.<sup>270</sup>

Tolstoy insists that the Old Law is incompatible with Jesus' instructions and that is impossible to abide by both.<sup>271</sup> He has Jesus say: "The old teaching of external service to God cannot be combined with my teaching of active love of one's neighbour. To unite my teaching with the old is like tearing a piece from a new garment and sewing it onto an old one."<sup>272</sup> He even hears Jesus as saying that his contemporaries' understanding of Mosaic Law was "false" and "full of contradictions."<sup>273</sup> Tolstoy therefore accuses the church of deliberately misleading Christians by pretending that "fulfilment" should mean that the Law of Moses remains binding.<sup>274</sup> Whenever "a teacher preaches [...] a new law of life", Tolstoy argues, "he must necessarily annul the old."<sup>275</sup> Jesus makes a point of reinterpreting the Mosaic Law – indeed, Tolstoy notes, "for this he is reproached with destroying the law of God; and for this he is put to death."<sup>276</sup> It is precisely because he challenges the old order that Jesus is seen as a threat and eventually crucified. For Tolstoy, in the Sermon, Jesus clearly establishes "five new, clear, and definite commandments," and these should therefore supersede the Mosaic commandments in terms of practical advice.<sup>277</sup> Therefore, as far as a Christian is concerned, the primary source for Christian principles should be the teaching of Jesus.<sup>278</sup>

Craig appears to disagree with Tolstoy. For him, the above verses show that "Jesus makes plain the continuity between his ministry and that of [...] the Old Testament."<sup>279</sup> He believes that Jesus did not reject but defend the Old Law against the "pseudo-righteousness of the Pharisees," and that this is visible for instance when Jesus says: "it is *lawful* to do well on the sabbath days."<sup>280</sup> Jesus actually defends the law against the interpretation of his contemporary religious leaders.

Nonetheless, just after he declares that he fulfils the law and the prophets, Jesus does radically reinterpret five of its commandments. So the question remains: in what sense is Jesus "fulfilling" the law? Besides, if it is so obvious that Jesus upholds the Old Law, why does he also make a point of asserting that he has not come to "destroy" it? Eller cites Bornkamm to explain that Jesus is deliberately dissociating himself from two positions: one which regards Jesus as a revolutionary and wants to completely discard the

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<sup>270</sup> Besides, as mentioned again in the next Chapter, Carson believes that the Old Law anyway resembles an anarchic political system in that it warrants no executive body, no taxes and no prisons. Carson, *Biblical Anarchism*, para. 3-6.

<sup>271</sup> Tolstoy, *What I Believe*, 64.

<sup>272</sup> Tolstoy, "The Gospel in Brief," 152. (Luke 5:33-39.)

<sup>273</sup> Tolstoy, "The Gospel in Brief," 200, 209, 279. (John 7:10-24, 10:1-10.)

<sup>274</sup> Tolstoy, *What I Believe*, 54-55.

<sup>275</sup> Tolstoy, *What I Believe*, 57.

<sup>276</sup> Tolstoy, *What I Believe*, 65.

<sup>277</sup> Tolstoy, *What I Believe*, 67.

<sup>278</sup> Tolstoy, "Introduction to an Examination of the Gospels," 100-101.

<sup>279</sup> [Anonymous], *Why I Worship a Violent, Vengeful God*, para. 14.

<sup>280</sup> Matthew 12:12 (emphasis added). Craig also refers to the near stoning of the adulteress as another example where Jesus is actually upholding the Mosaic Law. [Anonymous], *Why I Worship a Violent, Vengeful God*, para. 34.

“burdensome” torah, and another which sees the torah as the strict recipe for social order.<sup>281</sup> Instead of either of these positions, Eller claims that “[Jesus’] move is to punch *through* the torah to get the Giver who stands behind it.”<sup>282</sup> How so?

Yoder argues that in each of the five instances in which Jesus comments on the Old Law, he reinterprets it “in the same direction” as the original command.<sup>283</sup> Yoder explains: “What Jesus meant by ‘fulfillment’ was thus a quite literal filling full, a carrying on to full accomplishment of the intent of the earlier moral guides. It is therefore a most striking contrast, not to the Old Testament, but to its interpretation by current tradition; ‘righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees.’”<sup>284</sup> Jesus is fulfilling the law and the prophets by carrying the intent of their pronouncements further in the same direction. What he is critiquing is the rigid interpretation of the Old Law, not the Old Law’s intention.

Even if he contrasts Jesus’ and Moses’ commandments much more markedly, Tolstoy actually reaches a similar conclusion. He studies occurrences in the Gospels of the word “law” and eventually concludes that “Jesus by no means rejects what is eternal in the old law; but when the Jews speak to him of the law as a whole, or of its peculiar forms, he says that it is impossible to put new wine into old skins.”<sup>285</sup> Jesus does not destroy the Old Law, but he reinterprets it beyond the strictures which contemporary interpreters had confined it to.

For example, Ballou notes, when Jesus abolished the oath, he did not abolish the truth but exalted it.<sup>286</sup> Yoder agrees: “the same concern for veracity and for limiting the quasi-superstitious use of the name of God, which had *begun* by calling for truthfulness in swearing, takes a further step *in the same direction* by rejecting the oath itself as a concession to dishonesty and as an abuse of the name of God.”<sup>287</sup> Similarly, Yoder explains that (as mentioned earlier in the Chapter) *lex talionis* was intended as a “limitation upon vengeance,” a limitation which Jesus pushes “a powerful step further [...] in the direction set by the ancient rules.”<sup>288</sup> Ballou agrees: non-resistance did not absolve his disciples “from one iota of the law of love – the obligation to love their neighbors as themselves.”<sup>289</sup> Jesus, he says, “drew” that obligation “from the ark of the Mosaic Testament, all mildewed and dusky with human misapprehension, and [...]”

<sup>281</sup> Jesus dissociates himself from the first (leftist) group by emphasising that he is not there to destroy the law and from the second (conservative) group by noting a few verses later that the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees needs to be exceeded. Eller, *Christian Anarchy*, 80-81.

<sup>282</sup> Eller, *Christian Anarchy*, 81-82 (Eller’s emphasis).

<sup>283</sup> Yoder, “The Political Axioms of the Sermon on the Mount,” 44 (emphasis removed).

<sup>284</sup> Yoder, “The Political Axioms of the Sermon on the Mount,” 45.

<sup>285</sup> Tolstoy, *What I Believe*, 60. Tolstoy’s thorough textual analysis centres on the way in which the word “law” is presented. He establishes that throughout the Gospels, when used on its own, it refers to the eternal law, but when it is referred to as “the law and the prophets” or “your law,” it refers to the written law of the Old Testament. Tolstoy, *What I Believe*, 53-57. See also: Tolstoy, “The Gospel in Brief,” 162.

<sup>286</sup> Ballou, *Christian Non-Resistance*, chap. 2, para. 29.

<sup>287</sup> Yoder, “The Political Axioms of the Sermon on the Mount,” 44-45 (Yoder’s emphasis).

<sup>288</sup> Yoder, “The Political Axioms of the Sermon on the Mount,” 44.

<sup>289</sup> Ballou, *Christian Non-Resistance*, chap. 2, para. 30.

showed that the ‘neighbor’ intended was any human being.” Thus “[the] true principle was in” the Old Law, “but men could not clearly perceive it.”<sup>290</sup>

That is the sense in which Jesus “fulfils” the law: he radically reinterprets it according to its original intentions. On this, all things considered, all Christian anarchists appear to agree. Craig emphasises the continuity, Tolstoy and Elliott emphasise the difference, but all would appear to agree that there is continuity in the intention, albeit difference in the instruction. The discussion of Jesus’ fulfilment of the Old Law, and in particular the related debate on love’s fulfilment of justice, is picked up again in the Conclusion. For now, the point to note is that overall, the Christian anarchist reading of these verses stresses that Jesus criticises not so much the Old Law as rigid and legalistic interpretations of it by the elites, and that he “fulfils” the Old Law in the sense that he radically reinterprets it based on its original intentions. Whereas the strict interpretation of the law tends to authorise coercive legislation to ensure that all abide by its every jot and tittle, Jesus’ reinterpretation of it recovers its original intention and subverts any reliance on such official strictures – but this is explored in more detail in the Conclusion.

## 1.8 – A manifesto for Christian anarchism

Jesus’ reinterpretation of the Old Law, for Christian anarchists, therefore amounts both to a set of indirect, implied criticisms of state theory and practice, and to a blueprint for the life of the Christian community – a theme which is elaborated in Chapter 5. The Sermon is thus a political document, a manifesto for a Christian anarchist society. It touches on all the main points of the Christian (anarchist) political vision and how to reach it. Day thus writes that the Sermon “answered all the questions as to how to love God and one’s brother.”<sup>291</sup> It amounts to a complete “philosophical, moral, and social doctrine,” says Tolstoy.<sup>292</sup> For him, Jesus gives mankind “practical rules for life” which would lift it from the vicious cycle of violence it is caught in, and move it towards “the kingdom of peace on earth.”<sup>293</sup>

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<sup>290</sup> Ballou, *Christian Non-Resistance*, chap. 1, para. 66 (for the previous sentence as well). Even so, Ballou does accept that the Old Testament is “unequivocally against” non-resistance if “taken independently of the Christian revelation.” However, he says: “I do not admit the Old Testament to be as clearly, fully, and perfectly the word of God as the New Testament [...]. It is to be held in reverence as the prophecy and preparative of the New Testament – t

.” Moreover, he says, “the New Testament claims to supersede the Old, and the Old, by prophecy, type, and shadow, announced beforehand the coming in of a more glorious dispensation [...] In affirming this, I only affirm what both Testaments unequivocally declare respecting themselves and each other. To question it is virtually to question the credibility of both.” Ballou, *Christian Non-Resistance in All Its Important Bearings*, 25, 28.

<sup>291</sup> Day, *The Long Loneliness*, 141.

<sup>292</sup> To be fair, Tolstoy says this of Jesus’ teaching in general rather than just the Sermon, but this representation of his words is justified by the centrality of the Sermon in Tolstoy’s understanding of Jesus’ teaching. Tolstoy, “The Kingdom of God Is within You,” 49.

<sup>293</sup> Respectively: Tolstoy, *What I Believe*, 98, 203.

Tolstoy moreover rejects the view that the Sermon, this “vital Christian teaching,” is “impracticable.”<sup>294</sup> He accepts that it might be difficult, but believes that what matters is constant progress in its direction.<sup>295</sup> For him, “These commandments are, as it were, signposts on the infinite road to perfection towards which mankind is moving.”<sup>296</sup> That this road may be difficult does not make the commandments any less binding. Jesus’ words may be “hard words,” quips Maurin (quoting Stevenson), “but the hard words of a book were the only reason why the book was written.”<sup>297</sup>

Of course, to show that this Christian (anarchist) manifesto is not impossibly utopian, those who claim to follow Christ need to live by it. Maurin writes, in his typical playful style, that “The Sermon on the Mount will be called practical when Christians make up their mind to practice it.”<sup>298</sup> Yet as Andrews (quoting Kurt Vonnegut) bemoans, the “most vocal” Christians “demand that the Ten Commandments be posted in public buildings” but none of them “demand that the Sermon on the Mount, the Beatitudes, be posted anywhere.”<sup>299</sup> Christians seem to elevate the Old Law as the ideal to live up to, but not the teaching of the teacher they profess to follow.<sup>300</sup> Christian anarchists wish the same energy and commitment were given to the Sermon: “What a fine place this world would be,” writes Maurin, “if Fundamentalist Protestants tried to exemplify the Sermon on the Mount.”<sup>301</sup>

Christian anarchists, for their part, do try to exemplify it. Day says of both Maurin and Hennacy that they were constantly guided by the instructions of the Sermon.<sup>302</sup> One writer to *A Pinch of Salt* professes to be trying to take the Sermon literally, and adds that there is “no real justification” for doing otherwise.<sup>303</sup> Andrews describes how the Sermon became his community’s

<sup>294</sup> Tolstoy, “The Kingdom of God Is within You,” 106. See also: Andrews, *Plan Be*, 5; Tolstoy, *What I Believe*, 41-50.

<sup>295</sup> Tolstoy, “The Kingdom of God Is within You,” 107-110.

<sup>296</sup> Tolstoy, “The Kingdom of God Is within You,” 111.

<sup>297</sup> Robert Louis Stevenson, quoted in Maurin, *Easy Essays* (2003), 137.

<sup>298</sup> Maurin, *Easy Essays* (2003), 180.

<sup>299</sup> Kurt Vonnegut, quoted in Andrews, “Heaven on Earth,” 145 (emphasis removed). See also Andrews, *Plan Be*, 71-72.

<sup>300</sup> In a special report on religion and public life, the *Economist* mentions the following striking statistic when discussing, in passing, the sometimes worrying ignorance by militant religious converts of their founding texts: “although 83% of Americans regard the Bible as the word of God, half of them do not know who preached the Sermon on the Mount.” Of course, Americans are only mentioned as one of several examples, there is no suggestion that all Christian Americans are militant, and ignorance of who preached the Sermon on the Mount does not imply ignorance of some of its content. Nonetheless, the statistic does come as something of a surprise, and certainly seems to confirm that the Christian anarchist interpretation of Christianity is bound to sound quite radical today. [Anonymous], “O Come All Ye Faithful,” *The Economist*, issue 385, 3 November 2007, 9.

<sup>301</sup> Maurin, *Easy Essays* (2003), 193 (see also: 146).

<sup>302</sup> Day, *The Long Loneliness*, 179; Dorothy Day, *Peter’s Program* (The Catholic Worker), available from <http://www.catholicworker.org/dorothyday/reprint.cfm?TextID=176> (accessed 11 April 2005), para. 10; Day, *Selected Writings*, 137-144. Mormon anarchists inspired by Catholic Workers also see it as “our duty to build the kind of society and community that Christ’ Sermon on the Mount outlined.” Bushman, “The Mormon Worker,” 1.

<sup>303</sup> Kenny Hone [?], “The Gift,” *A Pinch of Salt*, issue 3, Pentecost 1986, 12.

“manifesto” when he lived in India.<sup>304</sup> These and other attempts by Christian anarchists to live out the Christianity they profess are reviewed in more detail in Chapter 6. The point to note here is that Christian anarchists do try to follow the instructions of the Sermon.

In short, Christian anarchists take seriously the political implications of Jesus’ instructions, especially non-resistance of evil. Tolstoy claims that it “should be the binding principle of our social life.”<sup>305</sup> For him, Jesus tells mankind: “You think that your laws correct evil; they only increase it. There is only one way of extirpating evil – to return good to all men without distinction. You have tried your principle for thousands of years; try now mine, which is the reverse.”<sup>306</sup> Jesus is thus calling for his disciples to transcend *lex talionis*, to love and forgive evildoers in order for the cycle of violence which has blighted humanity to be overcome. For Christian anarchists, this cannot but require a rejection of state theory and practice. Moreover, they argue that the state also contravenes – or through it obliges its citizens to contravene – the rest of the Sermon on the Mount. For Christian anarchists, therefore, the Sermon contains “the most revolutionary teaching in the world.”<sup>307</sup> It calls for revolution by its implied criticism of the state, but it also instructs Christians on how to behave in order for them to lead that revolution – a revolution which, as the next Chapter shows, Jesus further taught and practiced throughout the rest of his life.

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<sup>304</sup> Andrews, “Heaven on Earth,” 103. In recent years, he has also been actively promoting an internet-based community trying to live up to the Beatitudes, which he saw as a summary of the Sermon on the Mount – see <http://wecan.be/> a

<sup>306</sup> Tolstoy, *What I Believe*, 41.

<sup>307</sup> Hennacy, *The Book of Ammon*, 62.